

Conscious Travel: India's Best Awards Go Green

# TRAVEL + LEISURE

INDIA  
& SOUTH ASIA

travelandleisureindia.in  
DECEMBER 2019 / ₹ 150

**Aditi Rao Hydari**  
MAKES HERSELF AT HOME IN  
**Le Logis**  
**France**

*Organic & Biodynamic*  
**THE NEW WINES OF  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

**10**  
PARTY PLACES  
**END**  
**2019**  
**ON A HIGH**

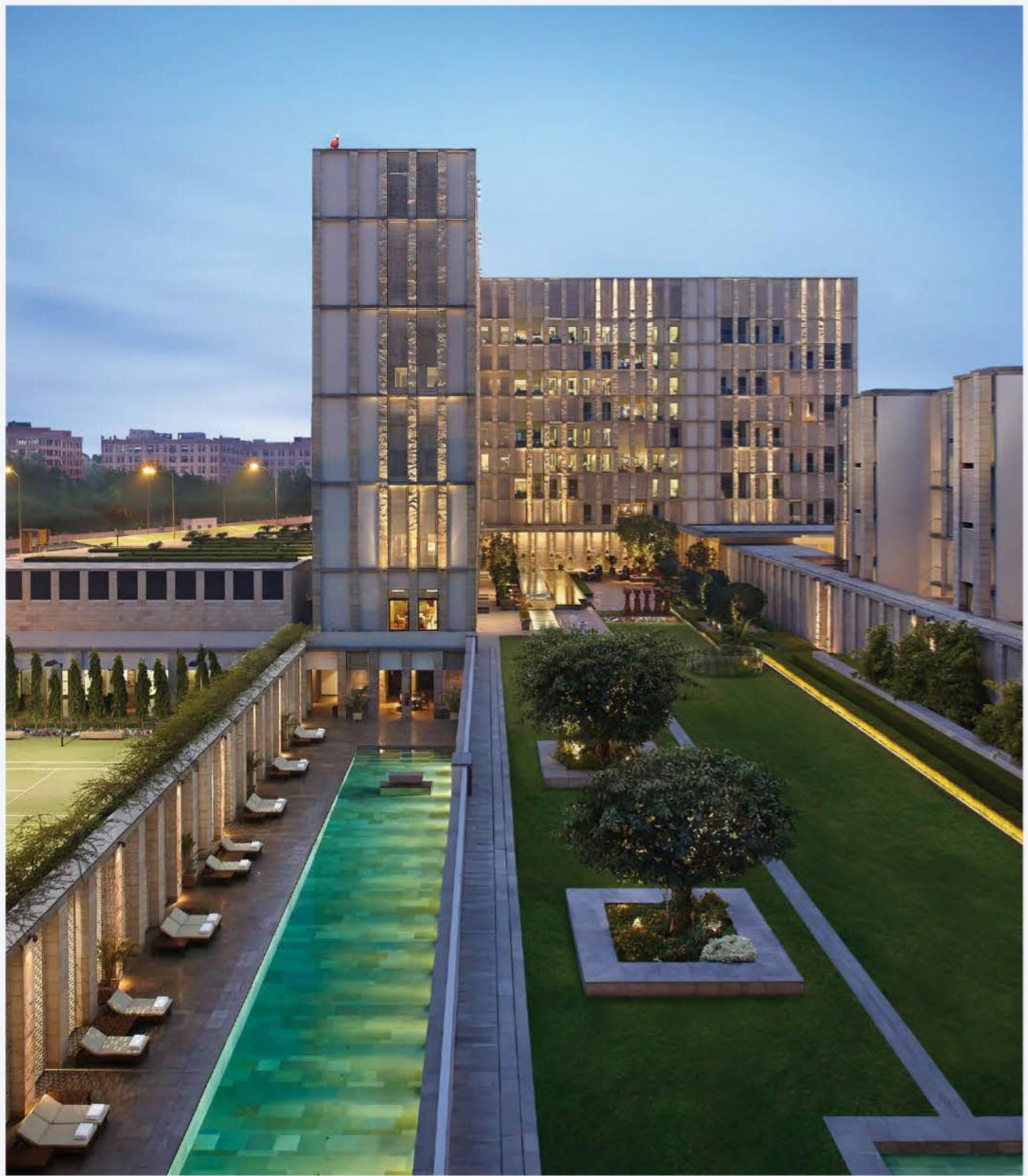
ISSN 2455-3409



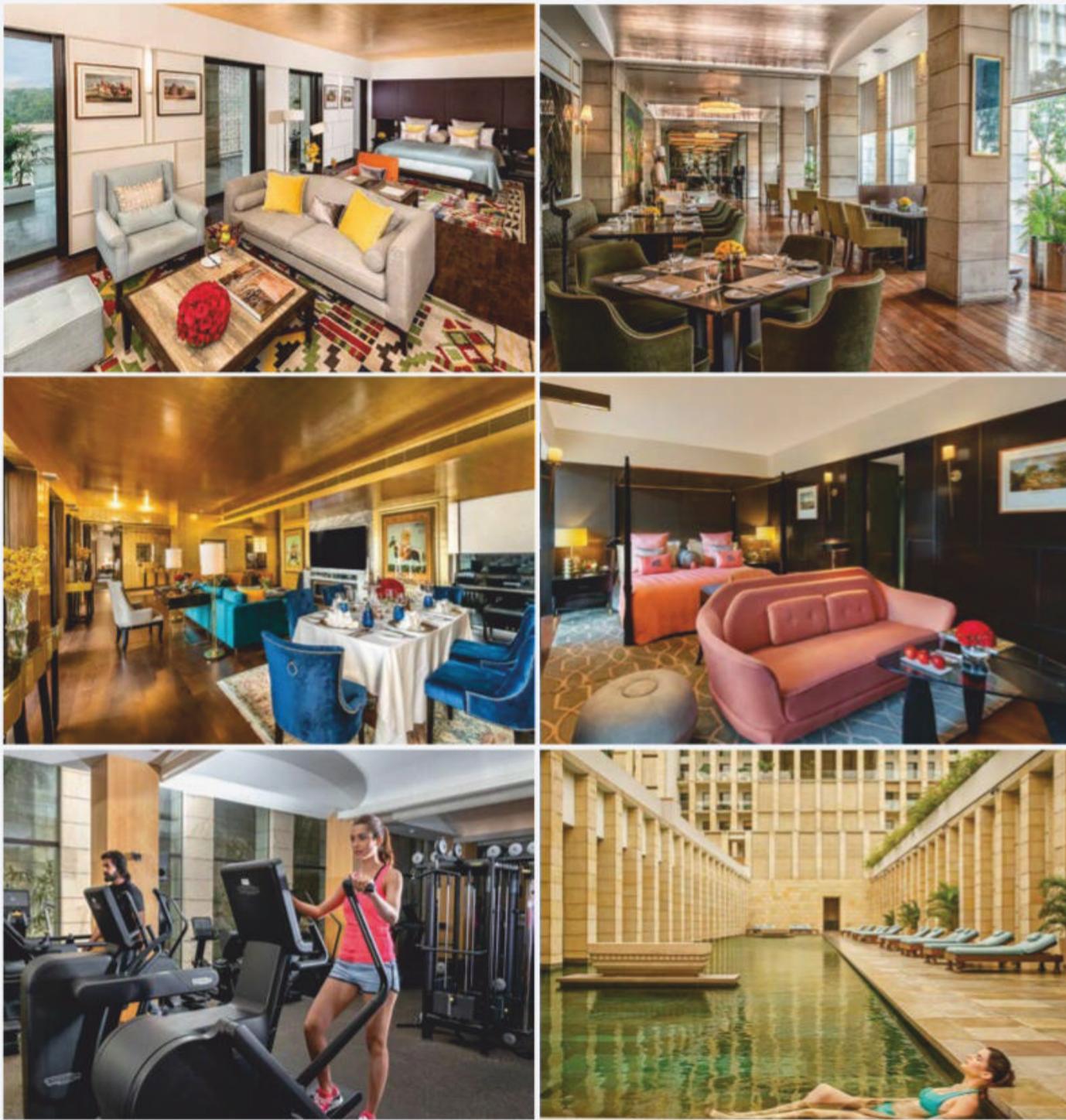
9 772455 340901 >

\$ 4.50 / SLR 450 / NPR  
35 / MVR 60  
PKR 300 / BTN 200 /  
TAKA 350

DISTINCTIVELY ICONIC.



There is an India that reaches into its past to celebrate a rich and varied tapestry. And another India that stretches out a confident hand to engage with the world. The Lodhi is the intuitive expression of a contemporary yet stylishly confident India. Well appointed rooms and every conceivable modern amenity mingle with history and culture like never before, in the heart of India's dynamic capital.



**Winner of Travel+Leisure India's Best Awards 2019 :**  
**Best Bleisure Hotel (Domestic)**  
**Best Hotel Popular Choice**

**THE LODHI**  
NEW DELHI

 A MEMBER OF  
THE LEADING HOTELS  
OF THE WORLD



## INSPIRED BY YOU

---

Authentic, indigenous experiences in harmony with the environment and society.  
Thank you for endorsing Responsible Luxury.



**Best Luxury Hotel Chain - ITC Hotels**

**Best New Hotel (Domestic) - ITC Royal Bengal**

**Best Wedding Venue (Domestic) - ITC Grand Goa**

**Best Hotel Loyalty Programme - Club ITC**

As voted by readers of Travel + Leisure, India's Best Awards 2019.



Agra | Bengaluru | Chennai | Goa | Gurugram | Hyderabad | Jaipur | Kolkata | Mumbai | New Delhi

1800-102-2333 | [www.itchotels.in](http://www.itchotels.in)



# Style or substance, pick two.

The new Audi A6 blends incredible design with  
equally impressive intelligence and intuition.

**Brand new, inside and out. The Audi A6.  
Audi is more.**

\*Terms and conditions apply. Images and colors are shown for representation purpose only. Accessories and features shown may vary for different variants. Finance scheme applicability at sole discretion of financier. Please consult authorized Audi dealers for latest information on features and specifications before deciding to place an order. All offers are at sole discretion of Audi India and subject to change without any prior notice. Always wear seat belts. Obey traffic rules.



**Audi Vorsprung durch Technik**

© AudiIN audiindia audiindia AudiIN | audi.in | Audi Approved :plus | myAudi Connect

# VARU

BY ATMOSPHERE



## Naturally Maldives...

EXPERIENCE AN AUTHENTICALLY MALDIVIAN EXPERIENCE...

Located in the North-West edge of Malé Atoll in the Maldives, the newest product under the dynamic Indian Ocean brand – Atmosphere Hotels & Resorts – **VARU by Atmosphere**. ‘Varu’ is a term in Native Maldivian language of Dhivehi with connotations of strength, resilience and life in abundance. The 5-star resort will offer a truly Maldivian experience by incorporating aspects of local traditions and cultures, structural design - fused together with bursts of chic tropical vibes.



@varuatmosphere

VARU - ATMOSPHERE . COM



# CONTENTS

December

## Departments

### 8 Letter from the Editor

#### Discoveries

16 A stunning year deserves a memorable end. Head to one of these 10 party destinations for New Year's Eve.

#### The Intelligent Traveller

40 Let fashion designers and A-List members Shivan & Narresh curate your wardrobe for the next holiday.

#### Through the Lens

48 A-List member and celebrity photographer Rohan Shrestha rediscovers Milan.

#### Experiences

##### THE LAST OF THE ARYANS

Head to remote villages of Ladakh that harbour the last pure bloodline of the Aryans.

60 FOR ART'S SAKE Discover London through an art curator's eye.

##### AN ARCHITECTURAL ODYSSEY

Liverpool is home to some of the best preserved, and at times repurposed, architecture in the UK.

#### Cover Story

66 Bollywood actor Aditi Rao Hydari marvels at the French countryside from the warmth of the manor house, Le Logis.

#### India's Best Awards 2019

##### THE WINNERS

79 Find out who was voted the best in the travel and hospitality industry by our discerning readers this year.

#### Wellness & Spas

108 Understand the Japanese philosophy of *shinrin-yoku*, and know where to get a whiff of the healing woods in India; go for an offbeat getaway in Chiang Rai, Thailand.



## Features

### 122 THE NEW WINES OF THE NEW

**WORLD** A tour of South Australia and Tasmania gives you a taste of the wine regions' flair for innovation and sustainability.

### 132 FIRST TIME'S THE CHARM

A whirlwind itinerary through Switzerland leads to a lot of revelatory firsts.

### India's Best Awards 2019

140 A glittering evening sees the stars descend at ITC Maurya, New Delhi.

### Your Best Shot

152 Reader Kunal Gupta trekked the Bavarian Alps and braved persistent rain to bring us a memorable snapshot.

#### ON THE COVER

Aditi Rao Hydari at Le Logis, Cognac, France.

ON HER: Organza and net dress, ₹48,000, **Gauri & Nainika**; visor, price on request, **Hermès**; gold and pearl hoops, ₹38,000, gold and pearl bracelet, price on request, **The Line @ Le Mill**; sneakers, ₹99,000, **Christian Louboutin**.

PRODUCER Aindrila Mitra  
PHOTOGRAPHER Rahul Jhangiani  
STYLIST Divyak D'Souza  
ASSISTANT STYLIST Gauravi Desai  
HAIR Keiichiro Hirano  
MAKEUP Cristine Dupuys  
LOCATION Le Logis, Cognac, France



*The Oberoi*  
MARRAKECH

*Introducing: The Oberoi, Marrakech.* Nestled within twenty five acres of citrus orchards and centuries old olive groves, The Oberoi, Marrakech has beautifully landscaped gardens and authentic Andalusian architecture inspired by traditional Moroccan palaces. Enjoy luxurious accommodation, personalised wellness experiences and authentic Moroccan and international cuisines. Picturesque views of the snow capped Atlas Mountains are complemented by our warm, sincere hospitality. *Heart. Felt.*



*Now open.*

[oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com)

## LETTER from the Editor



### FROM MY TRAVELS

*Le Logis, the brand home of Grey Goose, located in the French countryside of Cognac is a picture-perfect destination to truly enjoy life at your own pace. And when you're here, make sure to soak in the surreal surroundings—go for leisurely strolls, cycle around the village, and make the most of your 'me' time.*

There are some things money can't buy. And that's why this issue's cover feature is so special. *Travel + Leisure India & South Asia* was exclusively invited by the good folks at the Grey Goose House, Le Logis, to capture the idyllic destination with our enchanting cover star, Aditi Rao Hydari. If there ever was a place that looked straight out of our childhood fairytales, this princely French château would probably be it. Cocooned in vineyards in the sublime region of Cognac, Le Logis defines the French way of life (p. 66).

If you're planning a trip to Europe and looking for a culturally enriching trail, let our piece on Switzerland guide your itinerary (p. 132). Art aficionados, if you're heading to London for a heady dose of discovery, flip over to the expert guidance of art curator and connoisseur Shalini Passi (p. 60). A photo essay from Milan by fashion photographer and our

A-List member Rohan Shrestha nicely rounds off that part of the world (p. 48).

Elsewhere, fine organic wines and new sustainable ways of making them await your keen sense of discovery in South Australia and Tasmania (p. 122); a primer on the Japanese philosophy of *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, informs of all its benefits and where you can soak up the healing essence of the woods (p. 108); and if you wish to end 2019 on a high, our list of 10 destinations for the best New Year's Eve parties should have you sorted (p. 16).

This year (and in times to come), *Travel + Leisure India & South Asia* has been (and will continue to be) an advocate of Conscious Travel, whether it's through our content platforms or our collaborations. This cause also permeated India's Best Awards 2019, which took place at the ITC Maurya, New Delhi, on November 15. The coverage in this issue gives you a glimpse of the spectacular evening that was hosted by United Nations Environment National Goodwill Ambassador – India and champion of the sustainable way of life, Bollywood actor-producer Dia Mirza (p. 140). This issue is a toast to all the deserving winners of IBA 2019!

Until next year...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aindrila".

Aindrila Mitra  
aindrila.mitra@burda.in

#TNLTRAVELS ON  
Instagram: @travelandleisureindia  
Facebook: @tnlindia



World's Leading Airline to the Indian Ocean 2019



# Thirsting for epic journeys?

It's there, right next door

We fly to Sri Lanka 124 times a week from 11 vibrant cities.

The kind of adventure, excitement, entertainment, culture, luxury, tranquillity, flavour, scenery and absolute fun, where you reinvent yourself, is happening right next door in Sri Lanka.

*You're our world*

 **SriLankan Airlines**



# TRAVEL+LEISURE

INDIA  
SOUTH ASIA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Aindrila Mitra

DEPUTY EDITOR **Sumeet Keswani**

ASSISTANT EDITOR **Adila Matra**

SENIOR FEATURES WRITER **Rashima Nagpal**

SENIOR SUB-EDITOR **Sushmita Srivastav**

MANAGER (SOCIAL MEDIA & CONTENT)

EXECUTIVE (SOCIAL MEDIA & CONTENT)

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR

DIGITAL EDITOR **Priyanka Chakrabarti**

HEAD (DIGITAL MARKETING) **Pallavi Phukan**

FEATURES WRITER (DIGITAL) **Kumar Shree**

VIDEO PRODUCER **Aditya Mehrotra**

**Amitha Ameen**

**Bayar Jain**

**Kanchan Rana**

## ART

CREATIVE DIRECTOR **Ghanshyam Singh**

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR **Ajay Kumar**

DESIGNER **Paramjeet Kaur**

JUNIOR DESIGNER **Meghna Patwal**

## PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Ritesh Roy**

MANAGER **Manoj Chawla**

DEPUTY MANAGER **Satish Kumar**

## ADVERTISING SALES

BUSINESS DIRECTOR - TRAVEL **Sushmita Gupta**

NORTH

WEST/EAST

SOUTH

DIRECTOR - GLOBAL ADVERTISING PARTNERSHIPS

## MARKETING & ACTIVATION

HEAD **Mallika Raina**

MANAGER **Shubhangani Mahajan**

ASSISTANT MANAGER **Deepika Tripathi**

## CIRCULATION & VISIBILITY

SENIOR MANAGER **Bijay Kumar Kar** bijay.kar@burda.in

ASSISTANT MANAGER **Sanjay Kumar** sanjay.kumar@burda.in

## CORPORATE OPERATIONS

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER **Puneet Nanda**

HEAD (HR) **Sonya Caroline Shah**

SENIOR MANAGER (ADMIN) **Sushila Choudhary**

MANAGER (IT) **Arun Salhotra**

## Distributed By Living Media India Limited

Burda Media India Private Limited is a company of The Hubert Burda Media Group

### HUBERT BURDA MEDIA INDIA

CEO **Björn Rettig**

INDIA MD **Massimo Monti**

### HUBERT BURDA MEDIA

BOARD MEMBER INTERNATIONAL **Martin Weiss**

## INTERNATIONAL SALES & ADVERTISING

### FRANCE/LUXEMBOURG

#### Marion Badolle-Feick

T. +33 1 72 71 25 24

marion.badolle-feick@burda.com

### ITALY

#### Mariolina Siclari

T. +39 02 91 32 34 66

mariolina.siclari@burda-vsg.it

### GERMANY

#### Julia Mund

T. +49 89 92 50 31 97

julia.mund@burda.com

#### Michael Neuwirth

T. +49 89 9250 3629

michael.neuwirth@burda.com

### AUSTRIA

#### Christina Bresler

T. +43 1 230 60 30 50

christina.bresler@burda.com

### SWITZERLAND

#### Goran Vukota

T. +41 44 81 02 146

goran.vukota@burda.com

### UK/IRELAND

#### Jeannine Soeldner

T. +44 20 3440 5832

jeannine.soeldner@burda.com

### USA/CANADA/MEXICO

#### Salvatore Zammuto

T. +1 212 884 48 24

salvatore.zammuto@burda.com

## BURDA INTERNATIONAL HOLDING GMBH

LEGAL ADDRESS Hubert Burda Platz 1, 77652 Offenburg, Germany

POSTAGE ADDRESS Arabellastrasse 23, D-81925 Munich, Germany

## TRAVEL + LEISURE (USA)

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **Jacqueline Gifford**

**Jay Meyer**

## MEREDITH INTERNATIONAL, LICENSING & SYNDICATION

(syndication@meredith.com)

VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS AFFAIRS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LICENSING OPERATIONS

SENIOR DIRECTOR, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

MANAGER, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

ASSISTANT MANAGER, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

**Tom Rowland**

**Paul Ordonez**

**Wendy Zhang**

**Nicholas Arnold**

**Thomas D. Rodriguez**

## MEREDITH CORPORATION

CHAIRMAN & CEO **Tom Harty**

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER **Joseph Ceryanec**

CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER **John Zieser**

**BurdaMedia**  
India

## TRAVEL+LEISURE INDIA & SOUTH ASIA

VOL. 13, ISSUE 160

Burda Media India Private Limited, Plot No. 378-379, Second Floor, Udyog Vihar, Phase IV, Sector 18, Gurugram - 122015, Haryana. All rights reserved throughout the world. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited. Published by Puneet Nanda from Burda Media India Private Limited, Plot No. 378-379, Second Floor, Udyog Vihar, Phase IV, Sector 18, Gurugram - 122015 Haryana. Printed at Kala Jyothi Process Pvt. Ltd., S.No. 185, Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Municipality, Ranga Reddy District, Hyderabad - 500 133. Travel+Leisure does not take responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Opinions expressed in the articles are of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or publishers. While the editors do their utmost to verify information published they do not accept responsibility for its absolute accuracy. Unsolicited material is sent at the owner's risk and the publisher accepts no liability for loss or damage. Materials in this publication may not be reproduced, whether in part or in whole, without the consent of Burda Media India Private Limited.

This edition is published by permission of

## TIME INC. AFFLUENT MEDIA GROUP

1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 USA. Tel. +1 212 522 1212. Online: [www.timeinc.com](http://www.timeinc.com)

Reproduction in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner is prohibited. © Burda Media India Private Limited in respect of the published edition.

Copyright queries to [tplus@burda.in](mailto:tplus@burda.in)

## ADVERTISING

For your advertising enquiries please contact:

**DOMESTIC:** Sushmita Gupta +91-9711808101, [sushmita.gupta@burda.in](mailto:sushmita.gupta@burda.in). **INTERNATIONAL:** Sanjiv Bisaria +91-9811562019, [sanjiv.bisaria@burda.in](mailto:sanjiv.bisaria@burda.in)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe call **Gurugram:** 0124-3083500, 08218122745; **Mumbai:** 022- 26041735/36. E-mail: [subscribe@burda.in](mailto:subscribe@burda.in); Website: [www.burda.in](http://www.burda.in)



# Thank you for helping us soar even higher.

With your support, we've been named Best International Airport.  
You motivate us to deliver the best. Thank you for believing in us.  
[changiairport.com](http://changiairport.com)

Sky Nets  
Jewel Changi Airport  
Singapore

@ChangiAirport



**CHANGI**  
airport group  
*the feeling is first class*

[travelandleisureindia.in](http://travelandleisureindia.in)

## MAKE IT WORTHWHILE

If you ask us, what you should do in December to ensure you have the best New Year's Eve, we'd say travel, party and of course, shop at the most luxe festivals across the globe. This month, we bring you the best ways to bid adieu to 2019.



### 5 Luxurious New Year Parties Around the World

December 31 deserves every bit of oomph and glamour, hence, we've compiled the most extravagant parties across the globe. [travelandleisureindia.in/nye-parties-around-the-world/](http://travelandleisureindia.in/nye-parties-around-the-world/)



### Shopping Festivals Around the World

Be it souvenir shopping or collecting exclusive pieces for your abode, we pick the five most exciting shopping festivals from around the world.

[travelandleisureindia.in/shopping-festivals/](http://travelandleisureindia.in/shopping-festivals/)



### Ultimate Boat Parties in Ibiza

There are few places around the world where the music and the crowd are always just right—they are the party centrals of the world. And Ibiza is one of them!

[travelandleisureindia.in/boat-parties-ibiza/](http://travelandleisureindia.in/boat-parties-ibiza/)



Download Travel + Leisure India & South Asia digital editions, and follow us for the best in hotels, food, style, culture, and trends.

[@travelandleisureindia](http://travelandleisureindia.in) [tnlindia](https://www.facebook.com/tnlindia) [tnlindia](https://www.twitter.com/tnlindia) [traveleisurein](https://www.youtube.com/traveleisurein)

NOTE: ALL PRICES MENTIONED IN THE MAGAZINE ARE APPROXIMATE VALUES AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.



WWW.BURDA.IN



### SPOTTED

Virat Kohli's birthday celebrations took place in the lap of the Himalayas this year! We spotted some stunning panoramas of Bhutan on Virat and Anushka's Instagram.

[travelandleisureindia.in/virat-anushka-himalayas/](http://travelandleisureindia.in/virat-anushka-himalayas/)



### DISCOVER

Essaouira, a little fishing port on Morocco's Atlantic coast, serving as an alternative to the buzz of Marrakesh, is a UNESCO World Heritage-listed fortress town, whose origin dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

[travelandleisureindia.in/essaouira-morocco/](http://travelandleisureindia.in/essaouira-morocco/)



### #telltnlindia

THIS PHOTO BY @YAROSLAV\_SHURAEV WILL MAKE YOU YEARN FOR A SCENIC TRAIN RIDE IN ST PETERSBURG, RUSSIA.

TO GET FEATURED HERE, TAG @TRAVELANDLEISUREINDIA ON INSTAGRAM AND USE THE HASHTAG #TELLTNLINDIA.



Enjoy the  
**royal**  
experience of  
**Udaipur**  
at Rs. 12,750\* for a memorable  
**holiday.**

Set on the banks of Lake Pichola, Trident Udaipur truly captures the romance of Rajasthan.

With newly renovated luxurious and comfortable rooms, our warm hospitality, great dining options, pampering spa sessions, a relaxing swimming pool and Kids Club, we promise you a royal holiday.



The Trident Holidays offer at Udaipur starts at Rs. 12,750 \*per night for stays of two nights or more and includes • Daily breakfast • 25% savings on Spa treatments • Happy hour at the bar • 50% off on an additional room for two kids up to 12 years • Exclusive Kids Club  
**Offer valid for stays until 15th April, 2020 (excluding blackout dates 21st December 2019 - 3rd January 2020). Taxes as applicable. Conditions apply.**

Trident Holidays offer is also available at Trident Hotels in Agra, Jaipur and Cochin and on weekends in Mumbai, Gurgaon, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bhubaneswar.

# Discoveries

A GLOBETROTTER'S GUIDE TO THE LATEST IN TRAVEL

10

## Destinations For The Last Party Of 2019

Move beyond the ordinary and party like never before in these wild and newfangled spots around the world.

BY VIKAS PLAKKOT



### 1 MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA

There isn't a single street in Medellin where a party isn't raging in the wee hours. The young, hip Colombian city is tailor-made for young singles. Be it vibing to reggaeton at Sky Bar, or trying a variety of Latin dances at crossover clubs (*fondas*) such as Salón Amador, or picking up the basics of salsa at Son Havana ([sonhavana.co](http://sonhavana.co)), dance floors are a permanent fixture of Medellin nights. If you'd rather sit down, head to the party epicentre of Laureles, where many cafes and tiendas (stores) double up as bars after nightfall.

# ALWAYS BY DESIGN

THE Park keeps you at the centre of its universe. With spaces that are inspired, practices that are next and moments that stay longer.

It's all geared to be Anything But Ordinary.™  
Much like our guests

THE Park Mumbai

Toll Free No.: 1800 102 7275 | +91 1800 102 7275 (Intl)  
parkhotelsindia theparkhotels theparkhotels  
theparkhotels.com | Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Ltd.  
A member of Design Hotels™

Bangalore\* • Hyderabad\*  
Mumbai • Visakhapatnam  
New Delhi\* • Navi Mumbai  
Goa • Chennai\* • Kolkata\*

THE  
PARK  
Hotels

ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY.™



Ayia Napa, Cyprus.

2

**AYIA NAPA, CYPRUS**

Foam party, UV paint party, boat party, street party—you name it, and the Cypriot island of Ayia Napa has it going. Blessed with palm-fringed beaches and blue waters, the Mediterranean summer resort town is a magnet for those looking to let off steam. The island has 12 established clubs that don't open until 1 am and party till sunrise, with a couple of them like Club Aqua ([pambosnaparockshotel.com](http://pambosnaparockshotel.com)) serving their patrons beyond breakfast. In the afternoons, time can be spent sipping cocktails and grooving to chill-out music at beach hangouts like the Nissi Bay Beach Bar ([nissibay.com.cy](http://nissibay.com.cy)).

3

**TOKYO, JAPAN**

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the hard-working Japanese capital metamorphoses into a party beast at night. Put on your most fashionable attire and head out to the funky Shinjuku District, which houses not only classy rooftop bars like the 52<sup>nd</sup>-floor Park Hyatt ([hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)) but also the jam-packed old-school bars at the Golden Gai. When in Tokyo, give all-night karaoke a shot, preferably at the gaudy Uta Hiroba ([utahiro.com](http://utahiro.com)). Morph into a local at a Robot Show, which is exactly what it sounds like. Once the sun rises, end your night out with some delicious food at an izakaya.

4

**MUMBAI, INDIA**

The only problem with partying in Mumbai is that of too many choices. The city that never sleeps serves up a plethora of party places with groovy music, lit dance floors, and amazing cocktails. If you are looking to dance to the mixes of the city's best DJs, indulge in gourmet meals, and sip on vintage wines, Playboy Club in Worli is where you should be. With private butlers and hypnotic lighting, this signature Vegas nightclub will make sure you party into the wee hours. For some thumping New Year parties, head to Kitty Su ([kittysu.com](http://kittysu.com)) at The Lalit Mumbai where the music ranges from EDM to trance to techno and house, or the Matahaari nightclub where you can ring in the New Year in Ibiza style.



EXPLORE

# RAJASTHAN



Kumbhalgarh Fort

"Imagine travelling all the way from China to see the Great Wall in India! I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the wall at Kumbhalgarh fort which is the second longest in the world! I took hours to adore it. And even those many hours felt less." – Huan Yang, China

[www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in](http://www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)

 [facebook.com/rajasthantourism](https://facebook.com/rajasthantourism)  [twitter.com/my\\_rajasthan](https://twitter.com/my_rajasthan)  [instagram.com/rajasthan\\_tourism](https://instagram.com/rajasthan_tourism)

Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan  0141-2822863



RAJASTHAN  
The Incredibly State of India !



5

## BELGRADE, SERBIA

The Serbian capital has slowly but surely become the nucleus of the Balkans' nightlife. The poster-boys of Belgradian parties are the *splavs*—around 300 boats anchored on the river Sava that host parties on weekends. Disco-lovers are guaranteed the time of their lives at the sleek club *Lasta* ([lastasplav.rs](http://lastasplav.rs)). Alternatively, play it safe at *Klub 20/44*, an institution among the *splavs* where one can dance to everything from turbo-folk to techno. During the weekdays, head to one of the inner district venues like *Barutana*, an open-air dance club inside the city fortress.



6

## THESSALONIKI, GREECE

Experience modern cafes, quirky bars, taverns—all without breaking the bank, with a nightlife that goes on all year long, at Thessaloniki in Greece. Visit the *Ladadika* district post evening, and watch parties crop up as crowds begin to throng the bars and the music gets better and faster. Dance to Greek tunes at the famous *Panellinion*, drop by one of the *bouzouki* clubs where Greek singers serenade you all night long, or head to the *Valaoritou* bar district, which is frequented by locals.

7

## CHICAGO, USA

Home of the classic American sports bars, Chicago also caters to upscale revellers through its hip cocktail bars and gastro lounges peppered with amber spirits. At *Aviary* ([theaviary.com](http://theaviary.com)), the cocktail lounge of multi Michelin-starred Chef Grant Achatz, you can experience new-age mixology. If you're travelling in a group and looking to spend an evening over casual drinks, *Logan Square* is the place to be. Watering holes like *Emporium Arcade Bar* ([emporiumchicago.com](http://emporiumchicago.com)), featuring video games from various eras, and *The Owl* ([owlbarchicago.com](http://owlbarchicago.com)), with its indoor waterfall and jukebox, are guaranteed to leave an imprint on your heart.





# Japan **TOHOKU** Surprises

## Tohoku

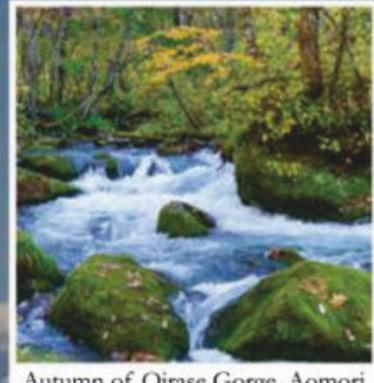
Tokyo to Tohoku  
in 90 min.~  
by Tohoku Shinkansen



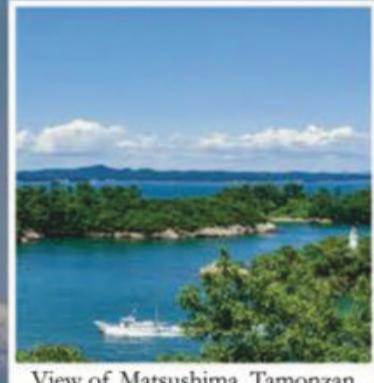
Tohoku (Sendai)



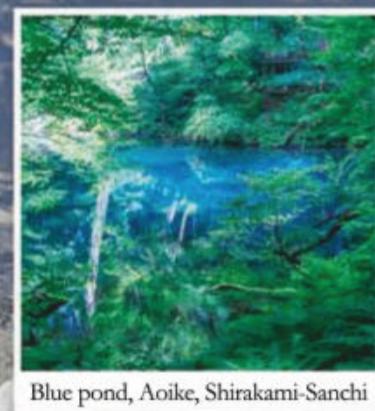
Lake Towada in Autumn Season



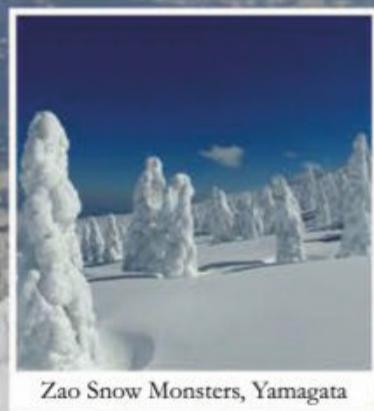
Autumn of Oirase Gorge, Aomori



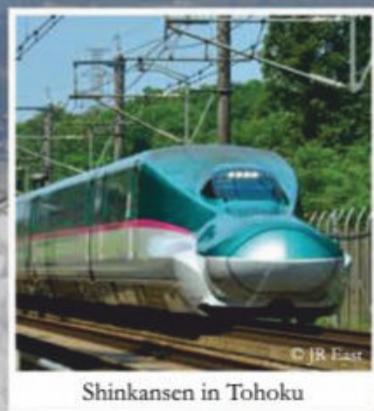
View of Matsushima, Tamonzan



Blue pond, Aoiike, Shirakami-Sanchi



Zao Snow Monsters, Yamagata



Shinkansen in Tohoku

#JapanSurprises

To know more, visit our Website: [www.visitjapan.co.in/tohoku](http://www.visitjapan.co.in/tohoku) OR  
 @VisitJapan.India | JNTO Website: [www.japan.travel/en/in](http://www.japan.travel/en/in)

Scan the QR Code





8

## BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Let your hair down and dance the night away in a city that never sleeps. The quintessential experience in the nightlife of Argentina's capital is a night at one of the many milongas—tango houses like the famous La Virtua ([lavirutadesolanas.com](http://lavirutadesolanas.com))—where you can try your hand at the sensual dance form or watch the locals perform it. The city's culture of speakeasies—underground cocktail bars—has become less of a secret today. Getting past the door of Harrison Speakeasy ([nicky-harrison.com](http://nicky-harrison.com)) in Palermo district may be tough, but well worth the cocktails. For a modern twist on the 'underground' scene, Uptown ([uptownba.com](http://uptownba.com)), which mimics the NYC way of nightlife, is the numero uno.

9

## MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Outlandish, flashy, and ceaseless: these words summarise Moscow's nightlife. Clubs in the Russian capital have upped the ante on extravagance and quirkiness. Among the trendiest names is Night Flight ([nightflight.ru](http://nightflight.ru)) where you can brush shoulders with Russian oligarchs and celebrities if you get admitted. At Soho Rooms ([sohofamilyhalls.ru](http://sohofamilyhalls.ru)), merrymakers can dance in the disco room till dawn and then grab an elaborate breakfast. All roads in Moscow eventually lead to Club Propaganda ([propagandamoscow.com](http://propagandamoscow.com)), a no-frills dance club that set the ball rolling for the city's nightlife 20 years ago. Every evening, it has something new to offer, and it's one of the few places to host LGBTQ+ parties.



10

## VANG VIENG, LAOS

The town of Vang Vieng, characterised by dramatic limestone mountains and vast paddy fields, oozes serenity today. But before a government crackdown in 2012, it was arguably one of the wildest backpacker party scenes on the planet, the hangover of which is visible to this day in the city centre. Sakura is where the party kicks off early, with free drinks and happy hours thrown into the mix. Later, parties migrate to Viva Club ([viva-pub.business.site](http://viva-pub.business.site)) or Room 101. The jackpot is a ticket to the exclusive Vang Vieng Jungle Project that takes place every Friday. 



## TAKE OVER AN ENTIRE ISLAND FOR YOUR WEDDING

Make our private island your own and create a dazzling wedding at Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay. Celebrate in impressive indoor and outdoor settings – from our white-sand beach to two grand ballrooms. Enjoy authentic Indian cuisine and classic traditions, fully immersed in Four Seasons luxury and service.

Discover all the beautiful possibilities  
(973) 1711 5000 [fourseasons.com/bahrain](http://fourseasons.com/bahrain)





*The Pelham is located in the heart of South Kensington, a few steps from Kensington Gardens.*

## Old is Gold

The Pelham, London offers the excitement of a London townhouse and the familiarity of an English country home.

SITTING IN THE HEART of South Kensington in London, The Pelham is an elegant boutique hotel, with bright, colourful interiors inspired by the adjacent Kensington Gardens. After being acquired by Starhotels in 2014, The Pelham underwent a facelift, but the ethos of the hotel remains intact.

The hotel sports wooden panels and open fireplaces, reminiscent of a grand English country home. Brushed metal and distressed glass finish, along with abstract paintings and wall hangings, add to the charm. The reception area has a vintage jockey scale chair, as a tribute to the hotel's past as a city stable. All the 52 bedrooms and suites at The Pelham have their own style, with a mix of antique and modern furniture, paintings, and precious fabrics. You can spot wooden and metal frames, floor-to-ceiling windows, and patterned



headboards, drapes and upholstery everywhere. The hotel has 10 luxurious suites, and each one of them is designed to suit personal tastes and needs of guests. The bathrooms are designed in solid granite and oak, with period-style taps and Penhaligon's toiletries.

The Pelham is located in the Victorian South Kensington district, making it an ideal accommodation option to explore major landmarks in London. It is a few minutes away from the Natural History Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum, and a few steps from Harrods, Hyde Park, and The Royal Albert Hall. For events and meetings, both business and private, The Pelham offers two bright, elegant conference rooms that can host up to 40 people, a private dining room, drawing room, and a library.

Dining at The Pelham is an elegant affair. The La Trattoria restaurant offers Italian classics reinterpreted by Michelin-starred Chef Alfred Russo. Guests can enjoy a delicious breakfast, light lunch, vintage afternoon tea, or an elegant dinner at this eclectic dining destination. [starhotelscollezione.com](http://starhotelscollezione.com)

*The Junior Suite at The Pelham. Left: The hotel sports wooden panels and open fireplaces, reminiscent of an English country home.*



# Smile all the stay.



**LUX\***

GRAND GAUBE, MAURITIUS  
RESORT & VILLAS

LUX\* Grand Gaube is a totally reimagined retro-chic tropical retreat in Mauritius. Think fabulous design everywhere you look, the hottest tables of the island, a rum treehouse in a Banyan tree, a pilates-yoga studio, and even in-house coffee and ice-cream brands. What's next?

MAURITIUS • RÉUNION • MALDIVES • CHINA • VIETNAM • U.A.E • ITALY • FRANCE

**\*LIGHTER. BRIGHTER.**

► *OZEN by Atmosphere has 49 overwater villas and 41 beachfront villas.*



## An Isle of Your Own

OZEN by Atmosphere offers the best of Maldivian hospitality and luxury in an intimate, mesmeric setting.

A LONG SNAKING JETTY CUTS through the turquoise lagoon that cradles the tranquil island of Maadhoo, in the South Malé Atoll in Maldives. Forty-nine overwater villas built on stilts overlook the lagoon on one end of the jetty, and on the other, there's a sandy beach leading to 41 standalone beachfront villas overlooking the horizon. The two ends meet to form the luxury resort of OZEN by Atmosphere.

A 45-minute speedboat ride from the Malé International Airport brings you to this piece of paradise, where an island vacation goes beyond just strolling barefoot on chalky sands or basking in the sun. Arrive here to experience absolute luxury and tranquillity—the standalone overwater and beachfront villas offer bespoke services without compromising on privacy.

All the 90 villas in the resort are tastefully done in earthy tones paired with fresh colours. While the Earth Villas sit pretty on the beach, and offer private tropical gardens, picking a Wind Villa would mean having the azure waters of the lagoon within touching distance of your private deck. But the



*The Earth Villa offers private tropical gardens.*

*Pair drinks with views of the ocean at the pool bar Joie De Vivre.*

signature three-bedroom overwater OZEN Residence at the tip of the pier, featuring a personal gym, kitchenette, an outdoor dining pavillion, and a 35-square-metre pool that melts into the turquoise lagoon, truly ups the ante.

With airy open spaces and interiors inspired by the Indian Ocean, The Palms offers a wide selection of delectable world cuisine. Head to the IndoCeylon for Sri Lankan, Indian, and Maldivian cuisine, and pick Peking for a delicious meal of authentic Chinese dishes. There's also Joie De Vivre—the pool bar and pizzeria, and R.A.W which serves up a selection of sushi platters. M6m is an exclusive underwater restaurant, where you get to gorge on coastal cuisine with the exotic Maldivian marine life visible through a glass wall away.

Indulge in holistic spa treatments at the ELENA Spa & Wellness Complex, swim with sharks, go for a fishing trip at sunset, or try windsurfing on the lagoon—OZEN by Atmosphere never ceases to surprise. [ozen-maadhoo.com](http://ozen-maadhoo.com)

—SUSHMITA SRIVASTAV



# Welcome to Margazhi Thiruvizha.

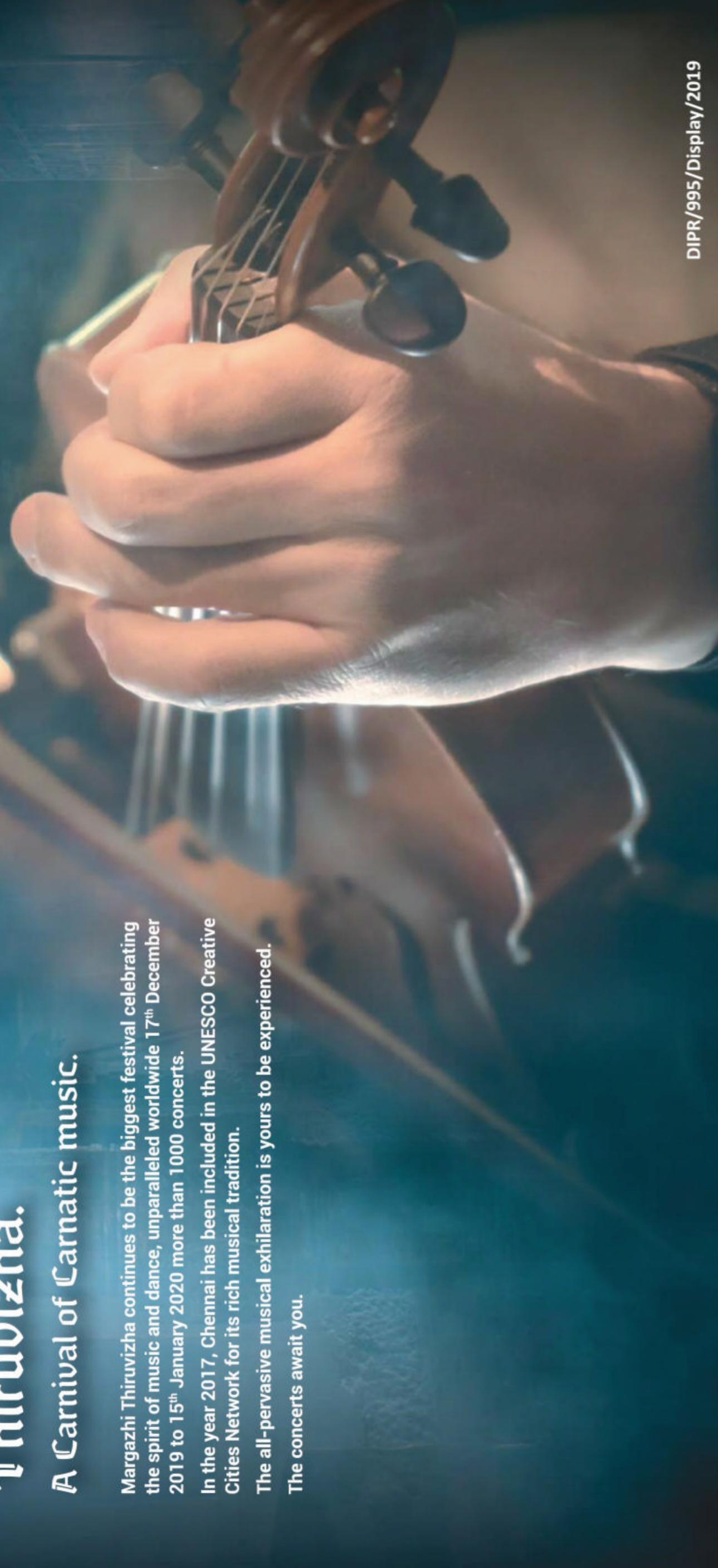
## A Carnival of Carnatic music.

Margazhi Thiruvizha continues to be the biggest festival celebrating the spirit of music and dance, unparalleled worldwide 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019 to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020 more than 1000 concerts.

In the year 2017, Chennai has been included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network for its rich musical tradition.

The all-pervasive musical exhilaration is yours to be experienced.

The concerts await you.



## Tamil Nadu Tourism

Chennai - 600 002. Tamil Nadu, India. Toll Free No. 1800 4253 1111  
Website : [www.tamilnadutourism.org](http://www.tamilnadutourism.org) E-mail: [tdc.chennai@gmail.com](mailto:tdc.chennai@gmail.com), [dotdepartment@gmail.com](mailto:dotdepartment@gmail.com)

# Crowning Jewel of Gujarat

Statue of Unity is not just the world's tallest statue. Visit the architectural marvel to get your fill of history and adventure in Gujarat.

A TRIBUTE TO THE 'Iron Man of India', Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Statue of Unity in Gujarat is the tallest in the world, with a height of 182 metres. One of the few man-made objects visible from space, it is located on the Sadhu Bet island, 3.5 kilometres from Sardar Sarovar Dam, and falls between the Satpura and Vindhya hills.

Designed by Padma Bhushan-winning sculptor Ram V Sutar, who has designed over 50 monuments, the Statue of Unity comprises a complex with a museum, a memorial garden, a designer bridge connecting Sadhu Bet island with the mainland along the Narmada River, an internal five kilometres-long roadway, an administrative complex, a conference centre, and a hotel.

Climb up to the observation deck, which is at a height of 193 metres above sea level, and catch dramatic views of the surrounding hills.

The sheer size of the monument is what attracts hordes of tourists every day. The statue is twice the size of the Statue of Liberty, and taller than China's Spring Temple Buddha, which earlier held the title of the tallest statue. The complex here exhibits 40,000 documents and 2,000 photographs, and has a research centre and an adjoining audio-visual gallery, where you can watch 15-minute presentations on the life and times of Patel.

Visitors can also stroll through India's largest cactus garden located near the statue. Spread over eight acres, the garden has over 330 species of cacti and succulents, procured from all over India and other countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia.



Statue of Unity is the tallest statue in the world.

Adventure seekers can brave treacherous rapids at Gujarat's first river rafting destination, Khavani, located near the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Inaugurated in August 2019 by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, Khavani offers rafting round the year due to the regular flow of water from the Godbole Gate. Great views, a dose of history, and a slice of adventure—a visit to the Statue of Unity has it all.

[statueofunity.in](http://statueofunity.in) —SHRIMAYEE THAKUR



The cactus garden near the statue.



Khavani is Gujarat's first rafting destination.

MARINE DRIVE

Eco Retreat

konark 2019

**Sun. Sand. 50 luxury cottages.  
Your New Year celebrations start 14<sup>th</sup> December.**

Parasailing, Paramotoring, ATV rides, Rifle shooting, Archery, Jet Ski, Banana Boats, Speed Boats, Bicycles, Beach Volleyball

**Food Festival, Flea Market, Cultural Shows & Music Concerts**



For more details & booking  
log on to [ecoretreatchennai.odishatourism.gov.in](http://ecoretreatchennai.odishatourism.gov.in)

**A unique tourism experience from Odisha Tourism**



From top: The Gran Vía street in Madrid is one of the most iconic streets in all of Spain; a trip to Madrid is incomplete without witnessing a Flamenco performance.

**P**eople don't go to Madrid just to see its attractions and partake in the popular activities, but to experience a unique way of life. If Spain is known for its free-spirited milieu, Madrid is at the heart of it, geographically and figuratively. With an engaging art scene, streets infused with infectious energy, culinary traditions that have stood the test of time, an enviable smorgasbord of bars, a buzzing nightlife, and foot-tapping Flamenco performances, Madrid is one of the liveliest cities in the world today.

# Viva La Vida

The throbbing heart of Spain, Madrid, is the place to soak up the essence of the vivacious country.

## HOTELS

The capital city houses excellent hotels. From traditional and boutique to modern and extravagant, there's plenty to choose from. While the iconic Hotel Ritz, Madrid is due to re-open as New Ritz Mandarin Oriental post extensive renovation by the end of 2020, other classic venues such as the InterContinental Madrid, The Westin Palace, and Gran Meliá Palacio de los Duques, among others, have their doors open round the year. With the city's growing popularity, more and more luxury hotels are emerging. Some of the new names include Hotel Riu Plaza de España, located in the emblematic Edificio España on Madrid's Gran Vía, and the five-star design marvel VP Plaza de España.

## FASHION

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century version of Madrid is on par with its contemporary European capitals when it comes to fashion. From the most luxurious global brands to home-grown labels that are putting the country

on the fashion map, the city has it all. On your shopping list should be an elegant Malababa or a peSeta. Be warned, the tempting collections at outlets of the Spanish brand ZARA will make you want to loosen those purse strings. *Sex and the City* fans may want to check out designer Manolo Blahnik's store on Calle de Serrano. In the heart of the historic district, just off the Royal Palace, Lepanto sells handcrafted leather bags and accessories, watches and jewellery, and high-end luxury porcelain from various labels—Spanish and otherwise. To take your pick of the ridiculously famous Manila shawl, trust Borca at Marqués Viudo de Pontejos – 2 to show you the best pieces. The most exclusive labels can be found in Milla de Oro, the area formed by the Serrano, Ayala, Goya, Ortega y Gasset, Lagasta, and Jorge Juan streets. Preciados Street is one of the premium shopping destinations in Madrid, and Huertas is the ideal place to mix a shopping spree with a heavy dose of art and culture.



## ART

The astonishing collection of art galleries and museums in Madrid is the legacy of Spanish royals who courted numerous painters back in the day and built up impressive collections of masterpieces from across Europe. An art capital in its own right, Madrid houses works of some of the finest artists—from Spanish painters such as Picasso, Dalí, Miró, Goya, and Velázquez, to Flemish and Italian greats. If you had to pick three venues to explore the art scene of Madrid, let Museo Nacional del Prado (which is currently celebrating its second centenary with a special exhibition), Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, and Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum be the museums on your list. Better still, remember just one name: Paseo del Arte. Literally meaning the art walk, this is a one-kilometre-long stretch that houses the aforementioned museums among others. A guided tour of Palacio de Liria—the 18<sup>th</sup>-century

neoclassical palace of the revered Alba family—must not be missed.

## F&B

In a country that is known for leisurely long lunches and the ritual of *merienda*, the fantastic food scene shouldn't come as a surprise. To make the best of it, it's recommended that you sample both—the long-standing traditional restaurants and the modern culinary landscape decorated with Michelin stars. There are dishes that commonly follow the stew pot cooking technique, for instance the famous *cocido madrileño*, which you can find at most restaurants round the year. For those interested in culinary rarities, the *gallinejas y entresijos* (lamb offal) can be found at festivals. Despite being landlocked, Madrid has managed to make seafood an integral part of its gastronomy. *Besugo a la madrileña* (red bream with garlic and onion), a favourite among locals, has been a part of



*Clockwise from left:*  
The rooftop of Hotel Riu Plaza de España; Museo Nacional del Prado is one of the best museums in the world; enjoy a cocktail at Salmon Guru, one of the World's 50 Best Bars; the peSeta flagship store at Huertas 37; one of the studded rooms at Palacio de Liria.

©Ángel Becerril

the traditional Spanish cuisine for over six centuries now. Choose from a range of gourmet markets, such as San Miguel Market and La Paz Market, for an immersive food experience. Vegan and vegetarian restaurants such as Restaurante Vegetariano and Ecocentro cater to the diversity of travellers that come to experience the city. With the release of The Michelin Guide 2020, Madrid now boasts 24 restaurants with Michelin stars—99 KŌ Sushi Bar and Gofio by Cicero Canary being the latest additions. But it is the cocktail bar culture of Madrid that has shot to fame. Think historic taverns, art deco spaces, and splendid rooftops transformed into lively bars. The most popular of them all, Salmon Guru, ranked 19<sup>th</sup> on the list of World's 50 Best Bars 2018!

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Air India ([airindia.in](http://airindia.in)) serves direct flights from Delhi to Madrid every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

- The city enjoys over 300 days of sunshine each year.

- Nine UNESCO World Heritage Cities—Segovia, Toledo, Aranjuez, Alcalá de Henares, San Lorenzo del Escorial, Cuenca, Córdoba, Salamanca, and Ávila—are only two hours away from Madrid.



# A Box of Swiss Chocolates

Switzerland is a favoured destination all year round, but it acquires a whole new dimension in winter.



*Clockwise from left:* The Dolder Grand in winter; enjoy fondue on a tram in Zurich; find the most coveted football trophy in the world at the FIFA World Football Museum; Bahnhofstrasse is known to be one of the most exclusive shopping streets in Europe.

**K**nown for its towering mountains and delectable cheese and chocolates, Switzerland is a delight to visit any time of the year. But it is at its cheerful best at this time of the year. This is when its cities light up with festive cheer and bustling Christmas markets, and thrill-seekers gear up for adventure sports such as skiing and sledding. Head over to Zurich to experience the vibrant winter culture, and to Interlaken for an adrenaline-charged adventure.



## ZURICH

The largest city in Switzerland, Zurich is perennially buzzing, especially during winter. Its Christmas Markets are spread across the city, from the Opera House to the Old Town areas of Neiderdorf and Rapperswil-Jona. However, the most famous Christmas Market in Zurich is the Indoor market of Christkindlmarkt, which is renowned for its 16-metre-high Christmas tree adorned with over 7,000 Swarovski crystal ornaments..

Being Switzerland's cultural hotspot, Zurich offers an endless array of cuisines, both traditional as well as international. Try one of the 100 specialities on offer in Haus Hiltl, the world's oldest vegetarian restaurant and one of Zurich's trendiest spots. Chance upon some fantastic fondue restaurants as you meander through the cobbled streets of Old Town. Confiserie Sprungli, founded in 1836, is famous for its signature Luxemburgerli macaroons and some of the country's finest chocolates. Budding chocolatiers can even visit the Laderach Chocolate Factory to try their hand at making chocolates.

One of the most famous shopping streets in the world, Bahnhofstrasse stretches for 1.4 kilometres and houses everything from elegant fashion stores and boutiques



with the best in shoes, accessories, porcelain jewellery, and Swiss watches, to pastry shops, where tired shoppers can relax and sip on hot chocolate.

Some of Zurich's most enticing attractions include the FIFA World Football Museum, a 3,000-square-foot mecca for sports fans. Here, visitors can find the original FIFA World Cup trophy on display, as well as test their football finesse in the gaming area. For a more family-oriented experience, visitors can head to the Zurich Zoo, considered to be one of the best zoos in Europe that houses more than 4,000 animals in a near-natural environment.



From top: Kayaking is a great way to experience the serenity of Lake Brienz even in winter; ICE Magic at the Top of Europe offers myriad adventures like skating and ice hockey; Ice Palace houses a number of ice sculptures.



## INTERLAKEN

There's never a dull day in Interlaken, the adventure capital of Switzerland. Nestled between Lake Thun and Lake Brienz, Interlaken is a charming town. It is surrounded by some of the highest mountains of the Alps, such as Mount Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau.

Take one of two routes, via Lauterbrunnen or Grindelwald, to get to Jungfraujoch, situated 3,454 metres above sea level. Known as the Top of Europe, Jungfraujoch offers spectacular views of the Aletsch Glacier, a UNESCO World Heritage site. While there, visitors can also head to the Ice Palace, situated in the heart of the glacier, to admire a cave full of beautiful ice sculptures.

ICE Magic at the Top of Europe offers a variety of fun activities, such as curling, skating, and ice hockey, with extravagantly-lit runways and a variety of ice rinks. Top the experience off with an all-you-can-eat raclette, a cheese-topped rösti, or a cheese fondue with mulled wine.

True to its moniker, Interlaken has ample options for thrill-seekers. Don't miss a ride on the First Glider, at Grindelwald - First, which is shaped like an eagle and flies through the mountain landscape at speeds up to 83 kilometres per hour. Adventurers can also head to the Schilthorn summit in the Bernese Oberland to experience the Thrill Walk, a 200-metre-long steel and glass bridge that begins at 2,970 metres and runs along the side of a rock, under Schilthorn's observation deck, ending below the Birg



cable car station. Piz Gloria, the world's first revolving mountaintop restaurant on Schilthorn is where many scenes of the 1969 James Bond movie *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* were filmed. The restaurant offers a James Bond breakfast, and is known for the iconic 007 Burger.

For a relaxing day, visit the VICTORIA-JUNGfrau Grand Hotel & Spa, which sits between two lakes at the foot of Jungfrau. The hotel has a monumental spa complex, which includes the 5,500-square-metre Nescens that is among the most beautiful spas in Switzerland.



*The Gudliya Suite has motifs from around the palace.*

*Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh at Sukh Niwas.*

## Live Life King-Size

The Gudliya Suite at City Palace Jaipur has opened its doors to tourists on Airbnb. Now you can live like a king in the royal suite and listen to glorious tales from a bygone era, while the staff spoil you silly. **BY KUMAR SHREE**

THE 300-YEAR-OLD City Palace Jaipur, located in the heart of the capital city of Rajasthan, is the epitome of opulence. Steeped in history, every nook and cranny of this iconic landmark has a tale to regale you with. The palace exemplifies the best of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Rajput architecture with ornate chambers, large and airy reception halls, crystal chandeliers, gilded wall decorations, and intricate carvings. Home of Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh—the 303<sup>rd</sup> descendant of the erstwhile royal family of Jaipur—

this landmark establishment has played host to the likes of Princess Diana, Oprah Winfrey, and Bill Clinton, among others. And now, it is all set to host you.

One of the suites at City Palace Jaipur is now available to book on Airbnb. The luxurious Gudliya Suite is tucked away in one of the private corners of the City Palace Jaipur, and opened for public booking on Airbnb. The suite has its own lounge, bedroom, luxurious bathroom, and an indoor swimming pool. The guests will also have a dedicated butler and guide at



COURTESY OF CITY PALACE JAIPUR



their service. A guided tour that takes you through the rich historic, cultural, and artistic heritage of the land is also part of the stay. Think guided museum tours, excursions, and shopping. Add to that an authentic Rajasthani meal on the terrace with a view of the Aravalli hills, and afternoon tea with the peacocks in the palace's gardens. Now, that's what you call a royal life!

The proceeds from each booking of the Gudliya Suite will be diverted towards the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation (PDKF), a non-profit organisation working for the upliftment of rural women and artisans in Rajasthan. The Gudliya Suite, priced at ₹5,74,898 per night, will be available at an inaugural amount of ₹71,862 for select nights, until January 1, 2020. The

balance amount will come from Airbnb as a contribution to the foundation. Thereafter, guests will have to pay ₹5,74,898.  
[airbnb.com/CityPalaceJaipur](http://airbnb.com/CityPalaceJaipur). +

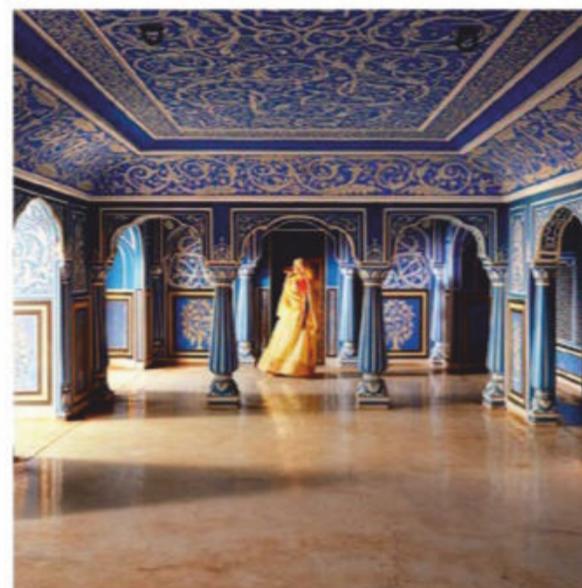
*City Palace Jaipur exemplifies the best of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Rajput architecture.*

## PRICE OF ROYALTY

The Gudliya Suite is priced at ₹5,74,898 per night. It will be available for an inaugural price of ₹71,862 for select nights, until January 1, 2020.

*City Palace Jaipur is an iconic landmark of the capital city of Rajasthan.*

*Decorative wall paintings inside the palace make for alluring picture backdrops.*





AlUla Hot Air  
Balloon Festival.

# A Wintry Affair in Arabia

The second season of Winter at Tantora—AlUla's glorious international festival—kickstarts on December 19. It promises an assortment of international acts, apart from unmissable experiences that are unique to the region.



The Maraya  
Concert Hall.

Set against the timeless landscape of AlUla—home to Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hegra and inarguably the most unique festival venue in the world—Winter at Tantora is back for the second time. The 2019 edition is aptly themed **Choose Your Wonder**. Scheduled to take place from December 19, 2019 to March 7, 2020, the festival boasts a world-class setup that will witness an exciting line-up of performers, experiences, and events across four sub-themes. Together, the sub-themes—Reimagining Heritage, Cultural Oasis, Adventure and Discovery, and Secret Escape—encapsulate the essence of this untouched destination.

**Reimagining Heritage** is a medium to offer visitors the opportunity to witness how ancient civilisations lived. Guided by expert storytellers, the Heritage Sites Experience takes guests to the ancient sites of Hegra and Dadan. Visitors will be able to use the latest technology, such



An opera performance at Winter at Tantora 2018.

as augmented reality and video projection, to enjoy an immersive and informative experience unlike any other. The festival also brings cultures together through the medium of food—from the hot pot of street food at the Winter Park to the regional delicacies on offer at Wadi al-Qura market.

Performances by legendary musicians from around the world and across genres make up the **Cultural Oasis**. These international acts are set to elevate the latest edition of the festival a notch higher than the previous year. Expect the king of Latin Pop, Enrique Iglesias (scheduled to perform on February 21, 2020), and Grammy and Oscar-winning recording artist Lionel Richie, along with the enigmatic Craig David (on February 28) to be the headliners. Operatic pop group **Il Divo**, and British funk and jazz group **Jamiroquai** look to set the stage on fire on January 24.

There are repeat acts as well. Tuscan tenor Andrea Bocelli, Egyptian composer, pianist, and conductor Omar Khairat, and Greek pianist

Yanni are set to return for the second innings, after a memorable inaugural gig last year. Khairat is set to perform on December 27, Bocelli on January 31, and Yanni will perform his cross-genre compositions on February 7.

The Maraya Concert Hall will be at the centre stage for the cultural performances. It is a state-of-the-art 500-seat facility with a mirrored facade that emerges like a mirage on the ancient rocky landscape of AlUla. This is also where the visitors will witness the Celebration of Beethoven (January 4 to 6)—an homage to the great German composer on his 250<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, and the multi-media theatrical production, *Jameel Buthainah*, a caracalla dance inspired by the glory and history of AlUla, on February 14.

**Adventure and Discovery** brings a dose of adrenaline to the festival. The Vintage Aircraft Experience is a high-flying adventure that will offer bird's-eye views from aircraft dating back to World War II. For a serene glide through the skies, the **AlUla Hot Air**

The ancient site of Hegra.



**Balloon Festival** comes with the opportunity of being part of a fleet of 100 hot-air balloons at sunrise or indulging in a solo flight at sunset. Then there's the Fursan Endurance Race, the second-biggest endurance horse race in the world that will feature over 200 riders from across the globe attempting to navigate a 120-kilometre course.

With **Secret Escape**, Winter at Tantora features an

exclusive, high-end journey into fine dining with Michelin-star chefs curating bespoke experiences for visiting gourmands. Also expect traditional souks as well as luxurious pop-ups for your shopping desires.

Grand, dramatic, and historic, the festival is an opportune time for the world to experience AlUla and learn about its thousands of years of history, ahead of its public opening in October 2020.



## Tropical Stunner

With spectacular marine life, exceptional dining, and breathtaking villas, JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa redefines luxury getaways.

THE RECENTLY LAUNCHED JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa boasts 60 spacious villas, all with private pools, wooden sunbathing decks, and a lot of open space. Add to this, breathtaking views of the Indian Ocean, and you have got yourself an unrivalled luxury experience. Each room in the resort is inspired by its surroundings and local Maldivian culture, and incorporates colours and materials that highlight both. For families travelling together, the resort offers a Duplex Beach Pool Villa that features a twin room designed for children accompanying their parents.

Little Griffins, a Family by JW Marriott kids' club, will keep your little ones entertained with its 43-foot-long pirate ship, sleeping area, games, and educational activities, while you unwind in the resort's adult-only infinity pool, located on the



*The Duplex Overwater Pool Villa at the resort.*

*Clockwise from right: The bathroom at one of the beach villas; catch sunset views from the Overwater Pool Villa; the secluded island on which the resort is located.*

tip of Vagaru Island. There's also a clubhouse on the property with a cigar room, shisha room, and billiards table.

JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa's location on a private island allows its guests the freedom to explore the surrounding reef that teems with sea life. An on-site marine biologist monitors the health of the reef, and organises diving and snorkelling excursions, among other watersports.

For a more relaxing day, head to the Spa by JW, which features seven private treatment rooms including a Deluxe Treatment Suite with a steam room, ice room, and sauna. It also features a manicure and pedicure station, relaxation zone, overwater yoga pavillion, fitness centre, and a retail area.

When it comes to dining, the resort spoils you for choice. The signature overwater restaurant, Shio, is ideal for a modern-grill-room dining experience. Smoked cocktails, fine prime cut meat, and fresh crustaceans are sure to bowl you over. Three full-service bars offer 300 labels of wine, Japanese sake, handcrafted cocktails, and over 98 types of rum.

Guests can reach the resort via a 55-minute seaplane flight from Velana International Airport, or a 35-minute domestic flight from Velana International Airport to Funadhoo Domestic Airport followed by a 15-minute speedboat ride. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

**-SHRIMAYEE THAKUR**





THE FULLERTON  
HOTELS AND RESORTS

THE FULLERTON HOTEL SINGAPORE  
THE FULLERTON BAY HOTEL SINGAPORE  
THE FULLERTON HOTEL SYDNEY  
THE FULLERTON HOTEL OCEAN PARK HONG KONG (2021 AUTUMN)

FULLERTONHOTELS.COM

# The Intelligent Traveller

TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP YOU TRAVEL SMARTER



Luxury designer duo and A-List members, Shivan Bhatya (right) and Narresh Kukreja.

## Art of Holidays

This festive season, don prints that make your style pop, and heads turn.

BY SHIVAN & NARRESH

THE WINTER FABRICS that will stand out this season for Indian travellers will be those that are warm yet create a dimensional statement. The go-to fabrics will be 100 per cent cashmere, 100 per cent fine merino wool, sheerer for quilted puffer jackets, leatherite, and foil. Knitwear, too, will be a staple add-on for your winter wardrobe for layering.

### Top Holiday Season Trends

**PRINT ON PRINT:** Opt for tribal prints that add a hint of sturdy, folksy emotion to the attire.

**EASY, COMFORTABLE SILHOUETTES**

**FOR LAYERING:** A wave of breezy silhouettes will flood the holiday wardrobes for many. Effortless kaftans, gusty capes, and versatile paneyos over swimwear will be every holidaymaker's best friends.

**ACCESSORISE:** Learn the necessity of travel paraphernalia—a straw hat, a beach rug, silk scarves, comfy espadrilles, sunglasses, etc.

A group of six people, three men and three women, dressed in professional business attire (suits and blazers), are standing in a row on a city rooftop. They are positioned in front of a modern city skyline with various skyscrapers under a clear blue sky. The group is diverse in ethnicity and gender.

# UNDISPUTED

GODS OF A NEW WORLD.





Be beach-ready as you head to the tropical paradise of Seychelles for a holiday full of sun, sea, and sand.

## Make a Splash!

Tribal and animal prints is the way to go! Pick rustic designs with bold patterns and colours for your end-of-the-year beach vacation.



### 1. CREAM

Very High Protection Cream SPF 50+, **Avène**, ₹1,750 (50 ml); [nykaa.com](http://nykaa.com)

### 2. BAG

Sunderbans Panthera Travel Tote, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹42,950; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)

### 3. CAP

Logo-Embroidered Wool and Silk-Blend Baseball Cap, **Ermenegildo Zegna**, ₹32,081; [mrporter.com](http://mrporter.com)

### 4. BEACH TOWEL

Ombre Beach Towel, **Michael Aram**, ₹10,417; [bloomingdales.com](http://bloomingdales.com)

### 5. SUNGLASSES

CHAPSSAL 033, **Gentle Monster**, ₹15,870; [gentlemonster.com](http://gentlemonster.com)

### 6. SHOES

Iconotribe Espadrilles, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹12,000; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)

### 7. ROBE

Panthera Silk Holiday Robe, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹36,950; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)

### 8. SHORTS

Panthera Swim Shorts, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹15,950; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)



# The Volkswagen Tiguan.

## For the journeys within.

Learning doesn't stop even after reaching the top. There's always room to grow more as an individual. For the ones on this endless journey of self-growth, we've built the perfect companion. The Volkswagen Tiguan.



Search  

4Motion | 7-speed Automatic DSG | Panoramic Sunroof | Infotainment with Voice Command | Easy Open Boot

Call 1800 102 0909 or visit our nearest Volkswagen dealership.



Volkswagen

Powered by  
Volkswagen  
Financial Services



Exchange through  
**Das WeltAuto.**  
Pre-owned cars you can trust. Guaranteed.

24x7 Roadside Assistance\*\* | Safer cars for India

Terms and conditions apply. Features and accessories shown may not be part of standard equipment. Appearance, features and specifications may differ across variants and are subject to change without prior notice. Actual colour may vary. Always wear seat belts. Obey traffic rules.

\*\*Roadside Assistance only within covered limits. For further details, please visit our authorised dealerships.

Add some glam to your beach parties this season.



## Ride the Tide

From flouncy wraps to paneyos and swimsuits in tribal prints—pick the hottest trends for your next beach rave.



### 1. HAT

Wide Brimmed Hat, **Nina Ricci**, ₹1,30,598; [farfetch.com](http://farfetch.com)

### 2. EARRINGS

Beaded Tassel Earrings, **Oscar De La Renta**, ₹30,774; [farfetch.com](http://farfetch.com)

### 3. RUG

Sunderbans Rug, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹14,950; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)

### 4. LIP MASK

Lip Sleeping Mask Berry, **Laneige**, ₹1,150 (20 gm); [nykaa.com](http://nykaa.com)

### 5. BODY MIST

Body Mist Oudh And Green Tea, **Forest Essentials**, ₹1,025 (100 ml); [nykaa.com](http://nykaa.com)

### 6. HEADBAND

Slate Headband with Tribal Pearl Skeinwork, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹9,950; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)

### 7. SUNGLASSES

Baguette M01, **Gentle Monster**, ₹15,870; [gentlemonster.com](http://gentlemonster.com)

### 8. SWIMWEAR

Sunderbans One Shoulder Ruffled Maillot, **Shivan & Narresh**, ₹36,950; [shivanandnarresh.com](http://shivanandnarresh.com)



TOP: LIV FRIIS-LARSEN/ALAMY



# Life On A Lagoon

Step into your very own piece of paradise at VARU by Atmosphere and experience Maldives at its best.

**O**n the northwestern edge of Malé Atoll, is the luxurious retreat of VARU by Atmosphere that unfurls like a Maldivian dream. With 108 overwater and beachfront villas, this tropical paradise is the perfect amalgamation of contemporary architecture and indigenous milieu.

A 40-minute speed boat ride from the Malé International Airport takes you to VARU, where a warm and traditional welcome awaits you—think a soothing welcome drink, a handcrafted palm leaf necklace, the resonating sound of conch shells, and the rhythmic *bodu beru* drumming. Every Atmosphere resort stays true to the 'Joy of Giving' philosophy, and VARU is no different. The dedicated staff believes in bespoke hospitality and carving out unique experiences for the guests.

The VARU Plan at the resort is a programme aimed to make your stay seamless. This all-inclusive package lets you indulge in different types of cuisine crafted by global culinary experts, explore the mesmerising lagoon through underwater excursions, and bask in the sun on your private deck while sipping on your favourite drink.

Live out your fantasy in the exclusive Water Suite, with a private plunge pool, a spacious bedroom, living room, and a deck with direct access to the lagoon. The beachfront Majlis Suite is nothing short of a delight, with two bedrooms over two floors, an inner courtyard pool, a private kitchen, and an extra room for your dedicated butler.

Step out of your dreamy overwater abode and stroll along any of the three jetties—Dolphin, Manta, or Turtle—and

enjoy stunning ocean views. The classy overwater restaurant, NÜ is perfect for a scrumptious meal of authentic Mediterranean seafood. Head over the KAAGÉ for a Maldivian fine-dining experience.

ELENA, the spa and wellness complex, features six overwater treatment rooms with glass bottom floors, a fully equipped gymnasium, a salt pool, steam and sauna facilities, a salon, and a boutique. Pick from the diverse range of holistic treatments or try the signature Maldivian Sand Massage to end your Maldivian vacation on a magical note.

**Clockwise from top:**  
The water villas at VARU has a spacious sun deck with direct lagoon access; the stand-alone beach villas open on to pristine white beaches; the bedroom in one of the beach villas.



## Time for Revelry

It's that time of the year again, when days and nights are steeped in high spirits. Here are the best party watches to don for the 2020 countdown. **BY MITRAJIT BHATTACHARYA**



### 1. ROYAL OAK SELF-WINDING AUDEMARS PIGUET

This new model of an iconic watch has subtle details that make for a more elegant and readable dial. The date window has been moved further from the centre, while the indexes have been widened and the minute train printed on the satin-finished external area. This 41mm model comes in steel with a choice of blue, slate grey, and black dial. *Price on request*

### 2. OYSTER 36MM IN YELLOW GOLD AND DIAMONDS ROLEX

The first thing that strikes you about this watch is the 18K yellow gold. The second is the turquoise dial, with hour markers in 18K gold. Lastly, the Day-Date 36 is equipped with a new-generation movement, self-winding mechanical calibre 3255. *Price on request*

### 3. HAPPY SPORT 30MM CHOPARD

The elegance of dancing diamonds gets heightened with the new Happy Sport 30mm. Beating steadily beneath the dial in white textured mother-of-pearl is an in-house self-winding movement, the Calibre 01.09-C. Chopard offers two new versions of its 30mm diameter round model with a glowing exterior combining 18-karat rose gold and stainless steel. ₹5,75,000

### 4. SERPENTI SPIGA BVLGARI

This new Serpenti watch artfully blends 18K rose gold and single-spiral brown ceramic with a metallic finish. Available in 35mm and fitted with high-performance quartz movement, the watch stuns you with a rose-gold bezel set with diamonds. ₹8,30,000

5

### 5. BIG BANG ONE CLICK RAINBOW HUBLOT

Hublot has brought in all the colours of the rainbow for this watch. Its dial boldly flaunts a chromatic bezel composed of 48 baguette-cut gems. Eight shades impart a distinctive visual cadence running from dial to case. This joyful watch also welcomes the colours of the rainbow onto its 'gummy' alligator strap. Another highlight is the patented 'One Click' interchangeable strap. ₹56,94,000





**NAMAH**  
straight from the heart

# The Perfect Getaway!



info@templatolio.com

**Amazing packages starting from ₹9,800 plus taxes**

- Accommodation on double occupancy • Welcome refreshments • Complimentary access to the swimming pool, gymnasium and recreation room • 20% discount on spa • 20% discount on additional food & beverages • Wildlife movies and morning yoga sessions

T&C apply. Government taxes as applicable.

---

**NAMAH, Jim Corbett National Park**

Dhikuli, Ramnagar, District – Nainital, Uttarakhand – 244715, India

T: +91 5947 266 666 | F: +91 5947 284 346 | [www.namah.in](http://www.namah.in) | [reservations.corbet@namah.in](mailto:reservations.corbet@namah.in)

through  
the  
lens  
*Milan*

# Always In Vogue

Fifteen years after his first visit, fashion photographer and *T+L India & South Asia* A-List member **ROHAN SHRESTHA** returned to Milan for a slice of fashion and football.





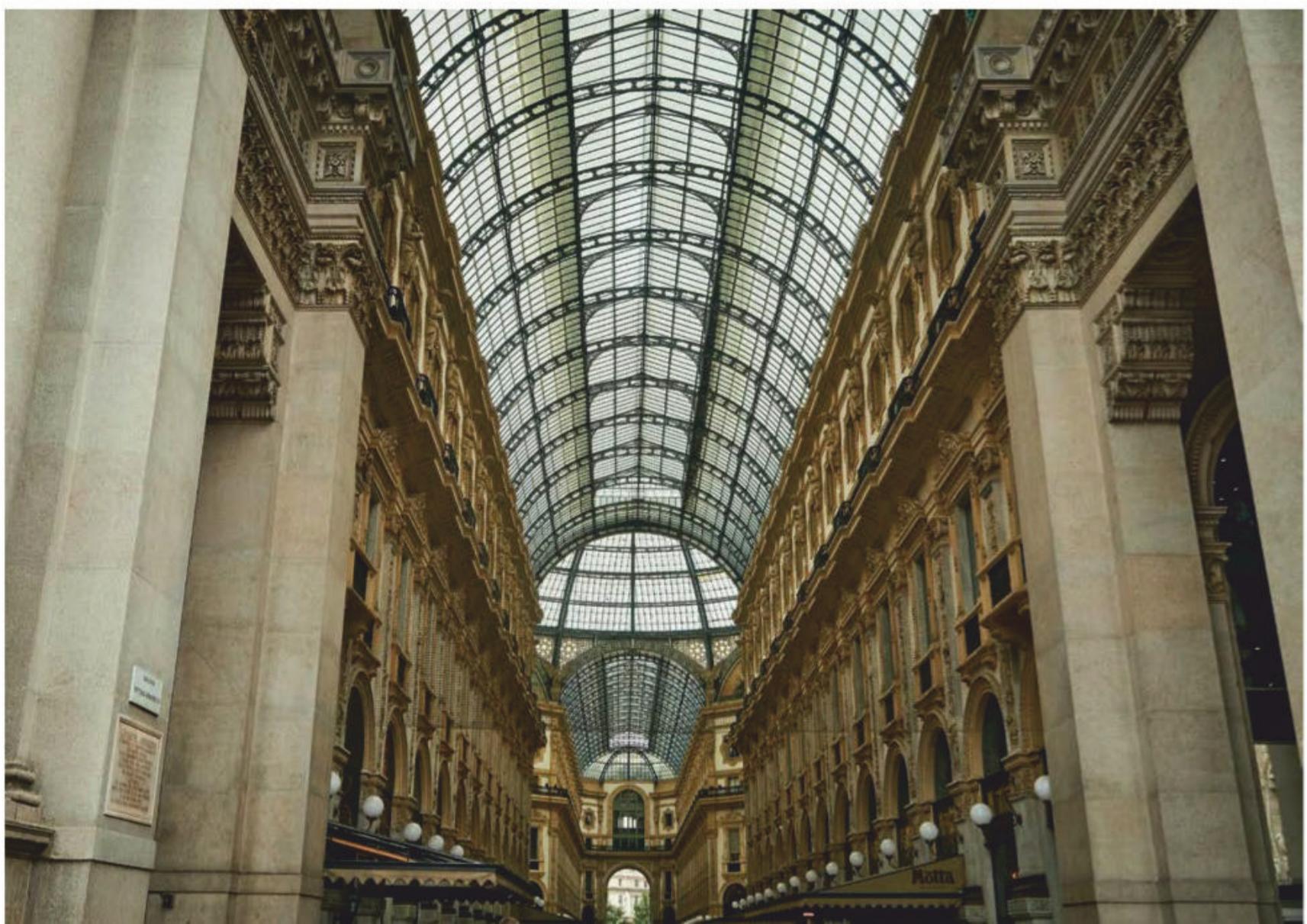
Arco della Pace, also known as the Arch of Peace, is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century structure designed as a triumphal arch celebrating Napoleon's victories. Opposite: Duomo di Milano or Milano Cathedral is one of the most impressive structures in Milan.



Clockwise from left:  
A Neoclassical church in the centre of Milan, the Basilica di San Carlo al Corso sports a colonnaded facade that extends around the sides forming a square piazza; the glass dome roof of Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Italy's oldest active shopping mall; Piazza Della Scala turns into a garden for the Green Carpet Fashion Awards Italia, one of the events at Milan Fashion Week.









Clockwise from far left: An Airbnb Plus penthouse apartment, which is just a stroll away from the Duomo; the rooms at the apartment are a perfect blend of vintage and modern; watching the Milan derby football match is an unrivalled experience; the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II houses numerous well-decorated restaurants, including some of the oldest establishments of Milan.

### What was your expectation from Milan? And did the city live up to it?

I've been to Milan before, but never to Milan Fashion Week. It was a fantastic experience to see the setting, the buzz, and the crowd. It's not something I experience often. And I fell in love with the city again. When I first went to Milan about 15 years ago, I was a 19-year-old travelling in Europe for the first time, and I didn't know much. The Internet wasn't as powerful, so my information was limited. But this time, the guidance that I got from the Airbnb team was fantastic, and they set up so many experiences for me that I got to see more of the real Milan.

### What did you discover on your walking tour of the city?

What's unique about Milan, and also the rest of Italy, is how proud they are of their culture, history, and heritage. The way they maintain their old architecture is inspiring. The city reminds me of home, because the people are so community- and family-driven. On my walking tour, I had a fantastic guide who gave me lots of information on the city's history—I believe that the best way to discover a city is on foot.

### Describe your stay.

My Airbnb Plus apartment was absolutely fantastic. It was right on the main street next to the Duomo. It was a huge penthouse apartment—three bedrooms, and a spacious living room with vibrant wall art, natural wood flooring, and an original marble fireplace, all for me!

### Favourite meal of the trip? Must-try dishes?

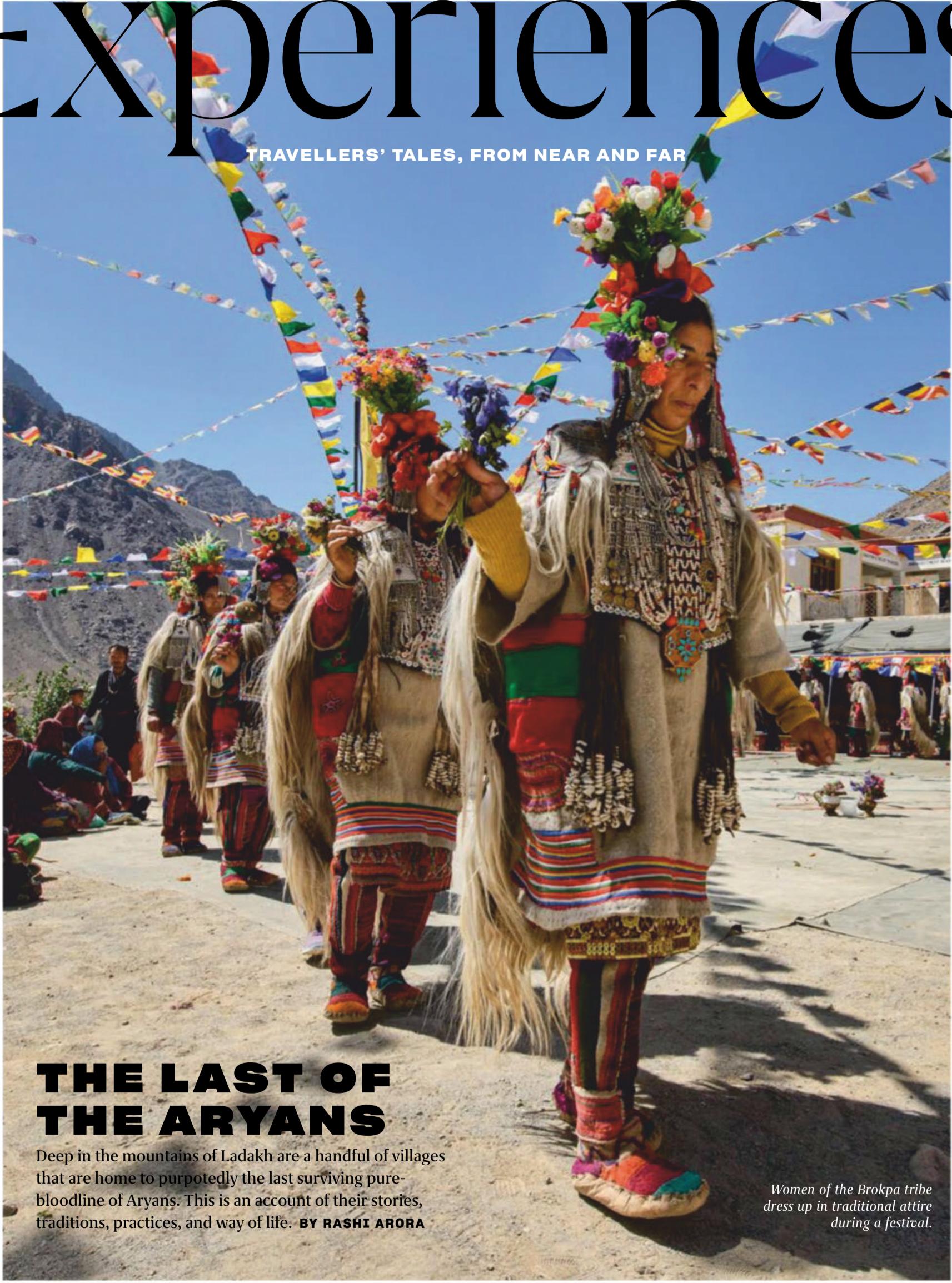
The pizzas were unbelievable! The espresso in Italy is amazing, and I'm a huge coffee buff, so I was curious to try various brews in different cafes. I'm not much of a cook. But I learnt to make pasta from scratch—kneading the dough and rolling it through the pasta-maker, etc.

### We heard you saw a football match there?

I've travelled extensively across Europe to watch football matches—Paris, Barcelona, and Madrid, and in England as well—London and Manchester. But this was possibly my greatest experience—the Milan derby is always a huge game! The city was at a standstill. Everyone was either an Inter Milan or AC Milan fan. The Milan derby happens just twice a year, but I'd highly recommend it to anyone who is a football fan. +

# Experiences

TRAVELLERS' TALES, FROM NEAR AND FAR



## THE LAST OF THE ARYANS

Deep in the mountains of Ladakh are a handful of villages that are home to purportedly the last surviving pure-bloodline of Aryans. This is an account of their stories, traditions, practices, and way of life. **BY RASHI ARORA**

*Women of the Brokpa tribe dress up in traditional attire during a festival.*

Around five hours from Leh by road, in the remote valley of Ladakh, is the unexplored village of Garkone. Besides the breathtaking landscape of the place, what makes it unique is the fact that Garkone, along with a handful of other villages in the area, is home to a unique community called Brokpas.

The Brokpas (*Brok* means hillock and *Pa* means inhabitant) believe they are the last 'pure specimens' of Aryan blood, and are regarded as the master race by many across the world. Legend has it that the Brokpas are the direct descendants of the Dards, of Indo-Aryan stock left behind by Alexander the Great, when he abandoned his mission at the banks of the River Indus in 326 BCE.

It was to document the last remaining Brokpas that I had set off on this trip. The purpose was to collaborate with people from different artistic backgrounds to create a community-based project that aims to document the oral history, folklore, food, language, religion, myths, culture, and traditions of the Brokpa community.

The area inhabited by the Brokpas is laid out as a cluster of four villages—Garkone, Darchik, Dah, and Hanu—perched on top of the rugged cliffs of Batalik sector, with the Indus flowing



▲ *Home to the Brokpa tribe, Garkone has breathtaking views on offer.*

From left: A young Brokpa woman shows off her traditional attire and jewellery; pearly button ear decorations and silver hair brooches are a part of the attire.



by. Three religions are primarily practised here—Islam, Buddhism, and Bon. Post the Kargil War, only two of the four Aryan villages now fall in the inner line drawn by the Indian Army, and are accessible by civilians after clearance from the Home Ministry. Garkone is about 13 kilometres south from the district headquarter of Kargil. It has 90 houses belonging to the seven original families.

It's in Garkone that I met the beautiful 53-year-old woman named Tamchos Dolma, popularly addressed as Aniley, meaning

'aunty'. She is the head singer in the Brokpa community, having learned and retained their traditional songs from her parents-in-law, who were also head singers during their times. Just like them, Aniley too is called upon for weddings, births, festivals, and deaths in the village. The songs she sings range from descriptions of nature, such as 'the song of the *montu tho* flower', to relationships with parents, siblings, and lovers. Aniley tells me that the songs sung today are actually not in the Brokpa language, but in Purkhi and Balti, following the invasion of Genghis Khan. She says that she would like to write contemporary songs to tempt the younger generations to be a part of the storytelling tradition that is fast dying.

I also happen to meet an elderly couple in Garkone—Tsering Tundup, 75, and his wife Tsering Choqzum, 78. Comparing the old and new lifestyles of the tribe, Tundup reminisces that in the olden days there were hardly any facilities, but people were happy, kind, and satisfied. The army has had a presence in the area since pre-Partition days, and even the former king of Jammu, Zoravar Singh, visited Garkone but did not maraud it. Tundup used to own around 500 goats, and was, thus, largely busy with livestock management, but he always managed to find time for the occasional hunt. Food was cooked in water, and goat butter was consumed separately. Soap came into use only about 40 years ago. "When we were young, we washed with water, ash, and ground apricot kernels. Only barley was grown, and cropping of millet, rice, etc. came in much later," recalls Tundup.

► *Older Brokpa ladies love spending time together.*

*Brokpa men celebrate a special occasion by playing traditional musical instruments.*

#### GETTING THERE

Garkone is a four-hour drive from Leh (197 km). Leh has direct air connectivity from Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai.

#### STAY

**Payupa Guest House** has double deluxe rooms with garden or mountain views. *From ₹5,000; facebook.com/payupaguesthouse*  
**Bete Pa Guest House** is pet-friendly and has a garden terrace. *From ₹5,000.*

#### SEE AND DO

Make sure to visit Khakukpa Buddhist Temple and Labdak Museum. Suru Valley (Nun Kun Peaks) is nearly four hours away from Garkone, and Lamayuru Monastery is a two-hour drive from the village. Drass War Memorial, Mulbekh Monastery, and Suru Basin are the places to visit in Kargil (63 km from Garkone). A trip to Leh should include sites like Leh Palace, Shanti Stupa, Hall of Fame, Spituk Gompa, Shey Palace, Leh Market, Thiksey Monastery, Phyang Gompa, Jama Masjid, and Hemis Monastery.



People preferred joint families since it prevented division of assets. Both men and women had the right to multiple marriages to ensure the carrying on of the family name. Wedding ceremonies lasted a week, and the celebrations involved the entire village. People got together to feast on meat and local wines that were contributed by everyone and prepared together. "The spirit of togetherness is sadly missing in today's celebrations," Tundup laments. "Also, illness came in when the way of life changed. Today's life is contrary to the ancient ways of health and prosperity, although people now have more money and access to better facilities of healthcare."

As part of their livelihood, the Brokpas primarily grow apricots. Earlier, they would barter these for salt. But now, commercialisation has fuelled the local economy, and each apricot tree fetches a household about ₹30,000 annually. My diet consists of goat milk, buttermilk, wheat, roasted barley flour, butter made of goat milk, spinach, and sesame. I also try their local drink called *chhang*, a traditional preparation of barley and salted butter tea, which is usually made on special occasions such as birthdays and weddings.

One of the main festivals here is Bona-na, during which the village headman lives in isolation for a month and purifies himself for the gods. He prays to the good spirits to bless



# Super Tasker Cream



**Limese.**

**Your skincare squad's  
most valuable player!**

Light but Perfect,  
Daily all-in-one cream

Made in Korea



Web [limese.com](http://limese.com) Instagram @limese\_connect



the village. Traditionally, a goat sacrifice used to be made to appease the spirit gods, but today, it has been replaced by a simple offering of prayer to the village Lama.

Losar Festival, the traditional New Year and the most important festival of Ladakh, is the second most important festival for the Aryans. Ladakhi Losar is celebrated in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of the Tibetan calendar, which is two months before the Tibetan Losar. The Losar celebration is followed by Galdan Namchot, the birth anniversary of Tsongkhapa, a famous teacher of Tibetan Buddhism who introduced the Gelug school of order. To celebrate Namchot in the month of December, people light up their houses, monasteries, and mountainsides with earthen lamps, and make offerings to bring prosperity in the coming year. The festival lasts a month, during which deities, ancestors, and animals are offered food. In some villages, there is a tradition of sculpting an old man and a woman out of snow. All family members get together to celebrate it. If anyone is

*The women of the Brokpa tribe tie their hair in interlocked multi-stranded braids similar to knotted dreadlocks.*

missing, they keep a cup filled with tea with their name. Shon and Koshen dances are especially associated with Losar.

In the Brokpa society, polyandry is quite prevalent. As in other tribal societies, it's the groom who pays the price to the bride. The birth of a child is a momentous occasion. However, child mortality rates in these villages are quite high due to the unavailability of medical facilities. Most women prefer to deliver at home rather than travel to Leh or Kargil and seek medical help. Childbirth rituals require the parents to observe certain strict rules—they cannot meet anyone for four days, nor can they visit a gompa. After four days, the parents of the newborn host a feast called *bangri* and also offer prayers to Zaman de Gypapo, king of the two ends of the village. Birthdays are celebrated at an interval of every 12 years, as per the Tibetan calendar. Social sanctions and rules are still strong, and that is how this lost army of Alexander has managed to keep its gene-pool intact till date. +

# Live the Luxe Life



[www.lifestyleasia.com](http://www.lifestyleasia.com)



For the Best in Luxury Living  
Visit *lifestyleasia.com* Now!



An artwork by Bharti Kher in Hauser & Wirth-Frieze London, an annual Art Fair in Regents Park.

The writer, Shalini Passi, loves to plan her London itinerary around the city's art exhibits.

## FOR ART'S SAKE

Art connoisseur and curator **SHALINI PASSI** sketches out a gallery trail in London. If you're a collector, admirer, or even a dilettante, take notes.

Whenever I'm in London, my trip is centred around the galleries and museums I want to visit. This impacts where I stay, what I eat, and how I get about: I must first put together a list of the unmissable exhibitions and collections in the city, and then plan everything else. In doing so, I end up discovering the unique characteristics of each neighbourhood I visit.

Let's start with Central London. At the heart of the city, Mayfair is an elegant upmarket district that is home to luxury fashion houses, established jewellers and tailors, and some of the city's best commercial art spaces. Here, you find 'Blue Chip' galleries such as Hauser & Wirth ([hauserwirth.com](http://hauserwirth.com)), Pace ([pacegallery.com](http://pacegallery.com)), and Marian Goodman ([mariangoodman.com](http://mariangoodman.com)). I love these spaces because they exhibit an interesting mix of modern and contemporary works, which reflects my own taste.

Hauser & Wirth shows a number of Indian artists, including Subodh Gupta and Bharti Kher. I love Pace for the interesting pairings they come up with in their exhibitions, comparing and contrasting artists who may have worked in different periods and/or places but whose work reflects similar ideas or styles. Central London is, of course, home to some of the

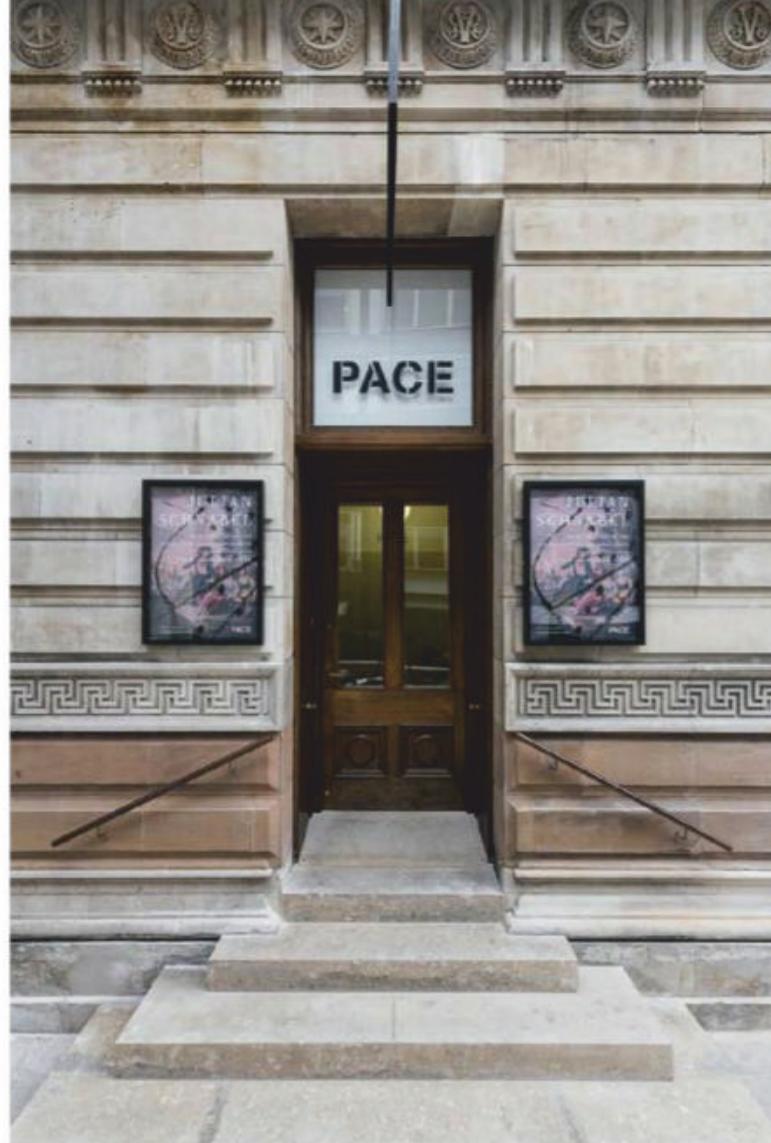


FROM TOP: GUY BELL/ALAMY; COURTESY OF SHALINI PASSI

city's most established public art institutes, such as The National Gallery, London ([nationalgallery.org.uk](http://nationalgallery.org.uk)) at Trafalgar Square and the Royal Academy of Arts ([royalacademy.org.uk](http://royalacademy.org.uk)) on Piccadilly. The RA is also a strong personal favourite of mine as it continues to present blockbuster exhibitions, such as the Antony Gormley retrospective (September 21–December 3, 2019), which I recently visited.

A short stroll down Piccadilly will take you to the glorious Hyde Park, home to the Serpentine Galleries ([serpentinegalleries.org](http://serpentinegalleries.org)). The two galleries are just five minutes apart, and in summer, you can enjoy the Serpentine's annual architectural commission, which showcases new temporary buildings by international architects. Close by is the museum district, which includes the Natural History Museum ([nhm.ac.uk](http://nhm.ac.uk)), the Science Museum ([sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://sciencemuseum.org.uk)), and the world-renowned Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A; [vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)). I always enjoy visiting the exhibitions at V&A immensely, and in particular, the fashion exhibits; this year, the Dior one made it to the list of my all-time favourites!

Head north, and you find some of the old guard: established commercial spaces such as the Gagosian ([gagosian.com](http://gagosian.com)) and the Lisson Gallery ([lissongallery.com](http://lissongallery.com)). These are long-standing faithfus in terms of delivering exhibitions of world-class artists in a commercial setting. Also in the north, you find Victoria Miro ([victoria-miro.com](http://victoria-miro.com)) and the Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art ([parasol-unit.org](http://parasol-unit.org)). Both these galleries are extremely inspiring in their roster of bold artists, such as Yayoi Kusama and Grayson Perry, whose exhibitions always make



*Passi loves Pace gallery for its intriguing pairings of artists from different periods and regions.*

*The National Gallery, London, at Trafalgar Square is a well-established art space in Central London.*

for an exciting and invigorating experience. Here, I love witnessing fresh ideas bloom. It is indeed admirable how these leading galleries show their commitment towards continuous innovation through some of the most socially relevant art in the world.

In recent years, South London has become a sort of firm fixture on my London art trail, with the arrival of the new Tate Modern Switch House building ([tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk)), which showcases a broader range of female and non-Western artists. Also on my itinerary are White Cube Bermondsey ([whitecube.com](http://whitecube.com)), one of Jay Jopling's iconic London spaces showing challenging works by artists such as Tracey Emin, and Newport Street Gallery ([newportstreetgallery.com](http://newportstreetgallery.com)), which shows works from the personal collection of Damien Hirst, including artists such as the inimitable Jeff Koons and the Chapman Brothers.

This is the perfect way to conclude my art tour, encountering new imaginations and visual languages that encapsulate my love for contemporary art and leave me moved, inspired, and engaged. ✎





*A statue of The Beatles in front of the Royal Liver Building, crowned with two Liver Birds.*

## AN ARCHITECTURAL ODYSSEY

On a freewheeling walk through Liverpool, **KALPANA SUNDER** discovers architectural marvels and priceless pieces of history repurposed into contemporary social hubs.

I am in Liverpool, a city that most people know for its music and football. Few realise that it's also an architecturally stunning city, with the most number of UNESCO-listed buildings in the United Kingdom outside London. For decades, it was a prosperous port city, where ships brought in tobacco, silk, and sugar. Shipping and insurance companies built grandiose offices, and iconic

civic buildings like the Liverpool Town Hall came up. In fact, Liverpool has been called England's first Victorian city.

In 2004, large parts of the mercantile port city were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, Liverpool has as many as 2,500 listed buildings, and around 27 of them are

Grade 1. Over the last few years, the town has undergone a renaissance as a cultural centre; warehouses and old buildings have been spruced up and converted into museums, galleries, or restaurants. My address, Titanic Hotel Liverpool, was a tobacco warehouse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; today, it's a stylish hotel with high ceilings and exposed brick work—draped in a nautical theme.

Coming out of the Liverpool Lime Street railway station, my eyes are first drawn to the magnificent St George's Hall, which used to house law courts and is now used for concerts, receptions, and lectures. Queen Victoria once declared that the “building was worthy of ancient Greece.” This was where Charles Dickens gave public readings of his books. With Corinthian columns, 30,000 Minton tiles on the floor, and bronze doors, this Neo-Classical building dates back to 1854 and was one of the first public buildings in the UK to be fitted with air conditioning. The space in front of the building has been used over the years for public rallies and meetings.

On the riverfront are the iconic Three Graces: a set of three buildings that count among the town's most beautiful and stately ones and have defined the city's skyline down the ages. They include the Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building, and the Port of Liverpool building, an Edwardian baroque beauty with a large dome. I take a guided tour of the Royal Liver Building, built with granite and reinforced concrete, and endowed with a clock-face (7.6 metres in diameter) larger than that on London's Big Ben. When it was built in 1911, it was UK's first skyscraper. The building is perfectly symmetrical on all sides, with Byzantine and baroque

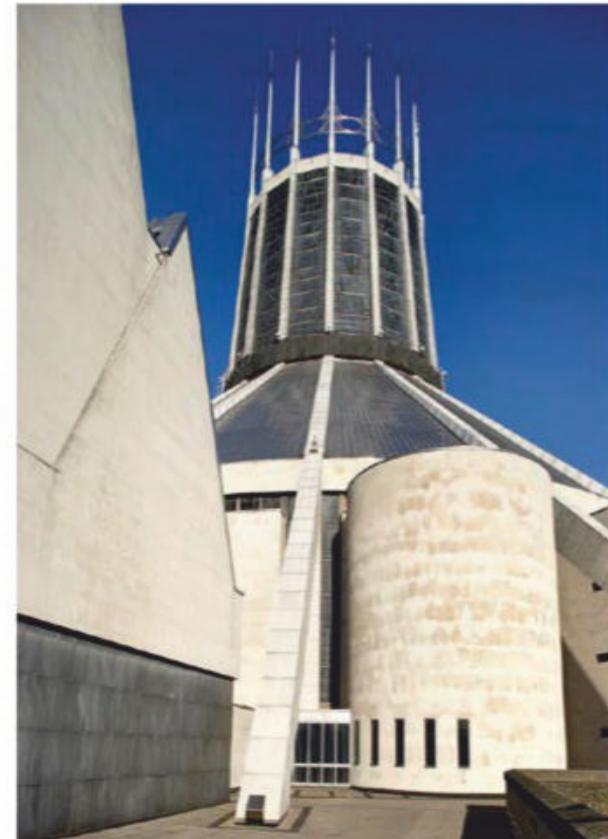


Once housing law courts, St George's Hall now holds concerts, receptions, and lectures.

From left: The Lime Street Station; the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King is the largest Catholic cathedral in England.

influences. The digital show inside the clock-face is a journey back in time—into Liverpool's history.

The Royal Albert Dock, near Mersey Ferry, is the largest collection of heritage buildings in the city. The complex of dock buildings and warehouses dates back to 1846, when it was built from cast iron, brick, and stone—with no wood at all. As many as 23 million bricks went into building this gargantuan complex with stocky iron columns. Valuable



cargo like tobacco, sugar, and silk used to be stored in these warehouses, and ships could load or unload directly from these warehouses. After being in a derelict state for many years, it was re-opened in 1984, with many of the warehouses converted into museums, luxury apartments, restaurants, and cafes.

Liverpool had the country's first schools of art and architecture—as far back as 1893. The buildings of the city were some of the earliest fire-proofed structures, and many were avant-garde designs, ahead of their times, like the Oriel Chambers, which featured the world's first metal-framed glass curtain wall that allowed light in. Designed by architect Peter Ellis in 1864, this was the precursor of the skyscraper. Today, the city has a mix of architectural styles: from Queen Anne style to Neo-Classical and Georgian.

Bookending the two sides of the aptly-named Hope Street, the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King are vastly different in architecture, but both are striking in their own ways. The Neo-Gothic Anglican Cathedral, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert, was built from pinkish red sandstone over 74 years and is the longest cathedral in the world. It has the world's highest and heaviest set of bells called the Great George, and the church is used for hosting



▲ Rodney street in the Georgian quarter recently featured on the series Peaky Blinders.

▼ The Royal Albert Dock of Liverpool is a popular tourist attraction.

conferences, exhibitions, graduations, etc. The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ, on the other hand, is a modern circular cathedral with exquisite stained-glass windows, built over an unfinished Romanesque cathedral.

Another listed building that I love is the Victoria Building, a part of the Liverpool University that inspired the term 'red brick university'. Under the brick work, the building has a fireproof structure of iron and concrete. With oriel windows, buttresses, arches, and spires, as well as Italian mosaic floors, this structure is used as a gallery and museum.



FROM TOP: RADHARC IMAGES/ALAMY; JON SPARKS/ALAMY



My favourite building though is the Picton Reading Room at the Liverpool Central Library. Modelled after the British Library's rotunda, it was designed by Cornelius Sherlock, with a domed roof, an oculus, wrought-iron staircases, and bookshelves. The modern side of the library comes with sweeping floors and a glass dome with an atrium. It's the perfect marriage of old and new.

On the corner of James Street is Albion House, with its turrets and gables. One of the city's most striking buildings, the 1898 structure has been dubbed by the locals as the 'streaky bacon' building. Albion House infamously used to be the office of the White Star Line shipping company (the registered home of the ill-fated Titanic). This eight-storey building, with its façade made from white Portland stone and red brick in alternate bands, is the place from where the sinking of the Titanic was announced. Today it's a Titanic-themed hotel called 30 James Street, with its bar named after Carpathia, the vessel that rescued the survivors of the tragedy.

Walking down Rodney Street in the Georgian quarter of the city, it's love at first sight for me. The area harks back to an elegant time in history when the city's elites, who had made their money from mercantile trade, wanted to showcase their wealth. Rows of Georgian townhouses line the street with their distinctive façades and coloured doors. Today, the street is a favourite of production crews—most recently, it featured on the series *Peaky Blinders*.



*The industrial warehouses and brick structures of Baltic Triangle have been repurposed into creative hubs.*

*Albion House, also known as the White Star Building, is a Grade II listed building.*

In Liverpool, urban renewal is in the air. The Everyman Theatre was once a 19<sup>th</sup>-century chapel, which became a public concert hall and finally a cinema theatre, until it closed down in 2011. It was completely rebuilt and opened in 2014 using the recycled bricks and timber from the original structure. Today, this award-winning building has a brick façade with 105 movable metal sunshades, each carrying a life-sized portrait of a contemporary city resident.

I have lunch at Leaf on Bold street, a tea shop and bar with antique sofas and fairy lights. It is housed in an Art Deco building that used to be a cinema in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Baltic Triangle is a neighbourhood where industrial warehouses and brick buildings are now hubs of creativity: radio stations, tech startups, cafes, vintage markets, and restaurants.

Before I leave the city, I chance upon one last extraordinary building: the Church of St Luke, also called the 'bombed out church'. It's a fragile shell, a skeletal shadow of a grand church with buttresses and pinnacles dating back to 1832 that was bombed by the Germans in 1941. Today, this roofless structure stands as a testimony, and memorial, to those who died in World War II, and hosts exhibitions, events, and concerts. It's entirely appropriate that in a city of beautiful buildings, even an architectural shell is preserved and serves a noble purpose. +

#### GETTING THERE

**Fly Etihad Airways** ([etihad.com](http://etihad.com)) to Manchester from Delhi or Mumbai, and connect by train to Liverpool. It's a 40-minute ride.

#### STAY

**The Titanic Hotel Liverpool** is an old warehouse in Stanley Docks, with Victorian architecture, transformed into a luxury hotel with a restaurant and spa. *Doubles from ₹17,000 per night; [titanichotel-liverpool.com](http://titanichotel-liverpool.com)*

#### The Hard Days Night Hotel

**Hotel** is a Beatles-themed hotel housed in a historic building, in the centre of town. *From ₹7,500 per night; [harddaysnight-hotel.com](http://harddaysnight-hotel.com)*

#### TOURS

**RIBA Liverpool City Tours** conducts two-hour-long tours of different parts of the city and their buildings and spaces.





# THE CHÂTEAU LIFE

---

OUR WHIRLWIND TRIP WITH COVER STAR  
**ADITI RAO HYDARI** TO THE FRENCH MANOR  
HOUSE OF GREY GOOSE—LE LOGIS—IN COGNAC WAS  
SURREAL. IT PAYS TO EXPERIENCE ‘WHAT MONEY  
CAN’T BUY’. BY **AINDRILA MITRA**

PRODUCER **AINDRILA MITRA**  
PHOTOGRAPHER **RAHUL JHANGIANI**  
STYLIST **DIVYAK D’SOUZA**  
ASSISTANT STYLIST **GAURAVI DESAI**  
HAIR **KEIICHIRO HIRANO**  
MAKEUP **CRISTINE DUPUYS**  
LOCATION **LE LOGIS, COGNAC, FRANCE**

*Hydari takes in the idyllic beauty of Le Logis.*

ON HER: Embroidered crop top, embroidered trousers, satin cape,  
all prices on request, **431-88 by Shweta Kapur**; gold earrings  
with pearl and black tourmaline, ₹34,000, **The Line @ Le Mill**.



*Hydari strikes a pose in front of the Le Logis manor house.*

ON HER: Knit turtleneck sweater, ₹7,500, **Huemn**; merino wool overcoat, price on request, **Péro by Aneeth Arora**; gold earrings with pearl and black tourmaline, ₹34,000, **The Line @ Le Mill**; suede boots, Hydari's own.



*From top: The chateau walls have stood the test of time for centuries, and now infuse history into the house with every exposed brick; the studio at Le Logis welcomes guests with warmth.*



## THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT MONEY INDEED CAN'T BUY.

And that's what the creators and brand custodians of Le Logis, the spiritual home of the French brand Grey Goose, take pride in. Most of us still haven't heard about this (read secret) château, because it's not easy to score an invite. But if you are passionate about the French countryside and the traditional wheat drink, then you'll find your way to this haven of tranquillity tucked away in the village of Juillac-le-Coq in the Cognac region, sooner than later.

On a sprightly fall afternoon, my production crew and I make our way to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century manor house to shoot the cover and cover feature for this year-end party edition of *Travel+Leisure India & South Asia*. Hydari is bewildered by the immaculate beauty of the place. I cannot help but soak up the surreal vibe of the centuries-old restored château. The structure was purchased by Bacardi in 2013, and after a year-long conservation project, it became the home for their brand, Grey Goose.

When François Thibault, the *Maître de Chai* (cellar master) reputed to be the best distiller in the Cognac region, joined hands with Sydney Frank, a visionary businessman from the US, in 1996 to create a supremely luxe product, success was inevitable. "Success is great, but we needed our own house. Le Logis is authentic, like Grey Goose," says Thibault. It was, in fact, Thibault, a Cognac local, who discovered the manor house. "I was looking for a place that was not in the city, or a castle... it had to be something authentic. As a local, I knew people and I knew all the exceptional places. So, in 2013, I negotiated a deal for Bacardi [and we took over this place]." There has been no looking back since. Having started from nine rooms, Le Logis has grown to accommodate 15 elegantly appointed bedrooms. It aims to provide an experience that's steeped in the countryside lifestyle of France. The interiors are contemporary and chic, with vintage

*Hydari photographed in the garden of Le Logis.*

ON HER: Knit turtleneck sweater, ₹7,500, **Huemn**; upcycled trench coat with hand-painting and embroidery, price on request, **Péro by Aneeth Arora**; pearl hoops, ₹22,000, **The Line @ Le Mill**.





*Chilling by the poolside with a cocktail is the ideal way to spend a lazy afternoon at this chateau.*

ON HER: Swimsuit, price on request, **Hermès**; studded gold earrings, ₹1,099, studded gold ring, ₹759, **Pipa Bella**; sneakers, ₹99,000, **Christian Louboutin**.

*Hydari goes for a stroll among the vineyards around Le Logis.*

ON HER: Organza ruffled blouse, ₹32,500, **Bloni**; woven skirt with appliqué, price on request, **Pankaj & Nidhi**; enamel bracelet, ₹759, **Pipa Bella**; ruby enamelled hoop earrings, ₹35,500, gold and pearl bangle bracelet, price on request, **The Line @ Le Mill**.





elements tastefully integrated into the 12 Executive, two Comfort, and one room for guests with special needs. The château also includes two living rooms with fireplace, a dining room, an open-house kitchen, patio, an outdoor swimming pool with barbecue potential (especially if you're visiting in summer months), and a state-of-the-art bar. There's also a private cinema room in the works when I visit.

Both, Thibault and Francisco Almeida, the brand home manager for Le Logis, are particular about the number of guests visiting the manor house. "We don't entertain more than 1,200-1,400 people in a year," Thibault tells me. This is not an ordinary B&B, after all.

A timeworn limestone façade, picture-perfect manicured lawns, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century quaint kitchen equipped with a wood-burning fireplace and stocked with some of the most delightful cheese platters and fresh fruits—life at Le Logis ('home' in French) is unhurried and dreamlike. When you live in a house with centuries of history and plenty of stories waiting to be unravelled, you want to soak it all up instead of rushing out for explorations in nearby neighbourhoods. There's no TV and a patchy internet connection at best, but when you're at Le Logis, you're in a beautiful, enchanting bubble—one that you don't want to leave. And as Thibault aptly puts it, "This place evokes emotions."

Almeida, who has been with Le Logis for over two years now, is articulate about the vision. "Everything here is about having a personal touch. We don't want to become a hotel. This is home, and we are proud to host people whom we invite." With his 'family' of 12 staff members, comprising Chef Sebastian Gillard, cocktail master Emmanuel Plumet, and the Le Logis support team supervised by Yohan, Almeida makes your stay at this private haven an unpretentious, personal, and immersive experience of the French lifestyle—all under the able leadership and inspiration of Thibault. Whether it's the *produits typiques* on the kitchen table, or the cycling tours that explore the friendly neighbourhood, stargazing evenings or hot air balloon rides that happen between May and October, each experience is tailor-made to suit Le Logis's discerning guests.

However, a stay at Le Logis would be blasphemously incomplete if you do not try the classic experience that delves into Grey Goose history and flavour. Spend some time learning about the brand through the senses of sight, taste, and smell. Take a stroll around the grounds with Thibault, with a stop at the rolling vineyards that envelope the château, followed by a conversation in the atelier where the brand's 'crop-to-cork' philosophy is on display. Here, you discover the origin of Grey Goose, learn how the flagship product is made from winter wheat grown in Picardie and





*From top: Nature at its majestic best at the French chateau; the poolside area at the mansion.*

*Opposite: Hydari soaks up the sun at Le Logis in Cognac, France.*

ON HER: Swimsuit, price on request, **Hermès**; organza silk cape, ₹14,500, **Pria Kataaria Puri**; straw hat, ₹2,500, **The Source**; mismatched morganite hoops, ₹22,000, **The Line @ Le Mill**.



## VISIT FRANCE

### Getting There

Le Logis is located in Cognac, France. It is close to Bordeaux (A10) and Angoulême (N10). The closest train station is at Angoulême, 45 minutes away (50 km). The closest airport is in Bordeaux (112.4 km), a 90-minute drive. Paris is 500 kms away and takes five hours to reach by road. There are multiple airline carriers connecting major Indian metros with Paris and Bordeaux (via connecting flights).

### Stay

Le Logis is open for booking requests through the year except between December 15 and January 15. Minimum booking request accepted is of eight to 10 people. **Le Logis Grey Goose, Domaine du Fresne, Route de Touche-Boeuf 16130 Juillac-le-Coq, France; [lelogisgreygoose@greygoose.com](mailto:lelogisgreygoose@greygoose.com)**

spring water tapped from a natural well right next to the bottling facility in Gensac-la-Pallue, and get to know where the fruits are sourced from. All of this culminates with a tasting of Grey Goose's most premium offering. Toss in a mixology session to be the star at the bar next time, and if you're hungry for more, don't miss the oysters and martini tasting as well as the caviar tasting sessions. Being a carb-binger, much to the agony of my yoga teacher, I had to sign up for a bread-making session. A coffee-roasting session, complemented by an espresso martini, was the icing on the cake!

If your idea of a holiday is living in a place steeped in history, heritage, and storytelling, with a garnish of the French countryside, then Le Logis is a no-brainer. Whether you're into the outdoors (this region is perfect to explore on a bike or on a leisure run), or have a penchant for gastronomy trails (the farm-to-table menu here is paired with the perfect drinks), Le Logis possesses a certain *je ne sais quoi* that makes it stand apart. The secret lies in the passionate tribe of people who live here and uphold the legacy of the château for all those who visit. +

*Lost in thought in the French countryside.*

ON HER: Merino wool sweater,  
price on request, **Péro by Aneeth**  
**Arora**; gold and pearl hoops,  
₹38,000, **The Line @ Le Mill**.



# “LE LOGIS IS EVERYTHING YOU IMAGINE A HOME TO BE.”

KNOWN FOR HER ETHEREAL AURA, BOTH ON AND OFF THE SCREEN, **ADITI RAO HYDARI** IS AN ADVENTURER AT HEART. SHE ARDENTLY BELIEVES THAT ‘AT THE END OF THE DAY, YOUR HAIR SHOULD BE MESSY, YOUR FEET DIRTY, AND YOUR EYES SPARKLING’. ENCHANTED BY THE BEAUTY OF FRANCE’S COUNTRYSIDE, THE ACTOR LETS HER GUARD DOWN AND OPENS UP ABOUT HER TRAVELS. **BY RASHIMA NAGPAL**

“

## HYDARI’S FAVOURITES

### Book

*The House of the Spirits*, by Isabel Allende

### Film

*Dead Poets Society*

### Quote

“You see things; you say, ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say, ‘Why not?’”

-GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

### What does travel mean to you?

To me, travel has always been about expansion. It’s about going with the flow of experiencing different cultures, food, [and] weather, as happily and effortlessly as possible. It’s about accepting and appreciating plurality.

### What kind of traveller are you?

I like different kinds of holidays. It depends on how I feel. Sometimes, I want to switch off and literally detox every aspect of my being. Most times, the thought of a holiday is about adventure, feeling free, feeling uninhibited, eating whatever I want, walking, cycling, meandering without an agenda, being spontaneous. Whatever holiday I go on, I like to have a person I love or people I love around me. I’m a trooper and not fussy about plans; I’m happy to let the day unfold. I find that exciting.

### Your most memorable trip?

My most incredible experience was travelling with my dance teacher, Leela Samson, and a senior of mine from dance class to Japan and China. We travelled for two weeks in China and two weeks in Japan. It was quite a challenge because I was travelling every second day, dancing, then travelling again. I was sleep-deprived, my muscles were always sore, I was in tears some days out of exhaustion. Any time off, I spent sightseeing.

I remember The Forbidden City. I cannot forget Hangzhou, one of the prettiest cities I’ve ever seen. I remember the slow-cooked mutton roast in Inner Mongolia, the huge fish market in Tokyo, the train rides where no one makes

eye-contact. I love animals and was most thrilled to see deer on the streets of Nara.

### A destination that took you by surprise?

Cape Town. It has everything! Mountains, sea, rivers, animals, great weather... Anyone would be spoilt for choice.

### Cities, beaches, or mountains—what’s your cup of tea?

The sea with mountains around it! I like quaint places—cobbled streets, beautiful architecture, cafes by the roadside, friendly people, and safe places where I don’t have to hang on to my bag for dear life!

### How was your experience at Le Logis?

Le Logis is everything you imagine a home to be, and more. [It’s] Luxury with love. It has an idyllic, almost fairytale-like atmosphere. The village across from Le Logis, the mountains, the vineyards... it is all just so beautiful. The kitchen and the area around it became my favourite place to hang out.

### If you could teleport, where would you go?

London in summer is always dependable and a lot of fun. The sun’s out and everyone’s in a great mood!

### Places on your bucket list?

Too many! There’s so much to see. I’d love to go to South America, Tuscany, the south of France, Jordan, [and] Morocco. I also want to see the Northern Lights. +



R-L: Team *T+L* hands over the Masterclass certificate to KM Chengappa, General Manager, The Leela Palace Chennai.



Chef Rohit Tokhi, Executive Chef, The Leela Palace Chennai.



Musician Matt Bacon.



## MIXOLOGY MASTERCLASS WITH THE LEELA PALACE CHENNAI

*Travel + Leisure India & South Asia*, in association with The Leela Palace Chennai, hosted a select gathering for a Mixology Masterclass at the hotel's beautiful lounge bar, Library Blu, on November 7, 2019.

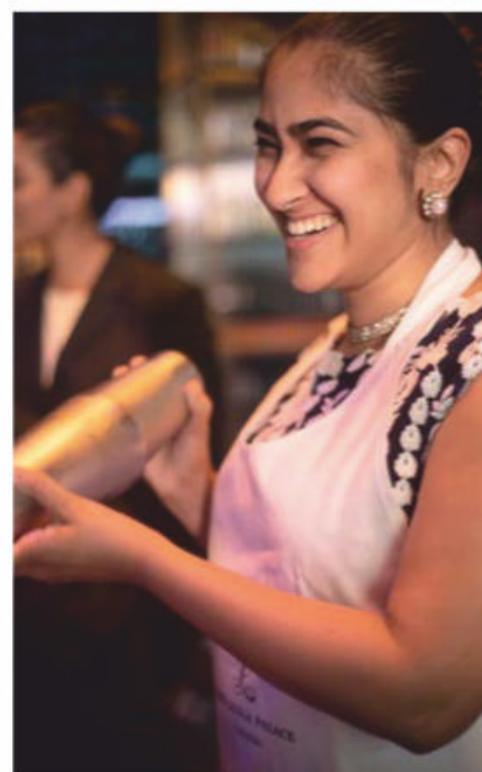
On the buzzing evening, a group of expert mixologists from the hotel whipped up some delicious cocktails, with entertaining tricks to boot. In the process, the crowd learned to make quite a few cocktails. Think Goose Bumps (infused whiskey, gooseberry juice, cinnamon syrup, Angostura bitters), Swagath (vodka, sambuca, betel leaves, *gulkand*, cardamom), Pazhamudhir Cholai (infused vodka, peach schnapps, lychee juice), Double Dose (whiskey, dark rum, saffron and dates syrup, lime juice, egg white), and Tavar Saaru (infused gin, white wine, cinnamon syrup). The refreshing drinks were paired with delectable *hors d'oeuvres* from the kitchen of Library Blu and unobstructed panoramic views of the Bay of Bengal. What's more, some of the guests were invited to go behind the bar and try their hand at mixing drinks—juggles and flips and everything.



Guests enjoying at the Mixology Masterclass.



Tavar Saaru — gin infused with rosemary and thyme.



Dr Nan enjoying the Mixology Masterclass.



Shakthi Girish with Editor-in-chief Aindrila Mitra and a friend.



Textures of potato.

Stay updated for news on our upcoming Masterclasses on [facebook.com/tnlindia](https://facebook.com/tnlindia).

Travel + Leisure  
India & South Asia

# INDIA'S BEST AWARDS 2019

TRAVEL +  
LEISURE  
INDIA'S  
BEST  
AWARDS  
2019

EVERY YEAR, INDIA'S BEST AWARDS RECOGNISES AND HONOURS THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS OF TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY, THANKS TO OUR READERS MAKING THEIR VOICES HEARD. THE AWARDS CELEBRATE THOSE WHO PUT IN PAINSTAKING WORK BEHIND EVERY SEEMINGLY EFFORTLESS HOLIDAY MEMORY THAT WE MAKE. THE 2019 EDITION, HELD AT ITC MAURYA, NEW DELHI, WAS EXTRA SPECIAL, AS WE FOCUSED ON AN IMPORTANT AND URGENT CAUSE: CONSCIOUS TRAVEL, A THEME THAT RUNS THROUGH OUR EDITORIAL COVERAGE AS WELL.

## BEST STATE

### TAMIL NADU

Bordering the Bay of Bengal, Tamil Nadu (*in pic*) is a melting pot of destinations and cultures waiting to be explored. On one end, the capital city Chennai buzzes with an irresistible urban charm, on the other, slow-paced cities like Kanchipuram offer a delightful bucolic contrast. The vibrancy of Chettinad—both in terms of architecture and food—wows travellers of every kind, while Kanyakumari's breathtaking horizons leave tourists speechless. The backdrop of the verdant Western Ghats binds such distinct features together, making the state one of our readers' favourites. [tamilnadutourism.org](http://tamilnadutourism.org)



### GUJARAT

The towering Statue of Unity is just one of the many reasons to visit the 'Land of Gandhi'. Stretching out into the Arabian Sea, with a hint of desert at Rann of Kutch and a 1,666-kilometre long coastline, Gujarat is a cultural potpourri. Boasting historical landmarks and architectural marvels in its cities, the state appeals to history buffs and art enthusiasts alike. Many a religious devotee finds faith in the numerous significant temples sprinkled across the state. [gujarattourism.com](http://gujarattourism.com)



## BEST EMERGING GREEN DESTINATION

*Domestic*

### ARUNACHAL PRADESH

With over 80 per cent evergreen forest cover, Arunachal Pradesh (*in pic*) deserves to be called the best green destination in India. Its challenging peaks, untamed rivers, gurgling waterfalls, and wild forests, teeming with exotic wildlife, have been kept safe despite the influx of tourists and the development that has come with it. [arunachaltourism.com](http://arunachaltourism.com)

### SIKKIM

Sikkim's geography has gifted it a repository of over 5,000 species of flowering plants. Amid this riot of colours, animals like the musk deer and red goral, and 550 species of birds find a home. The state has always made proactive efforts to stay pristine. There's little wonder that it was acknowledged as the world's first 100 per cent organic state by the UN. [sikkimtourism.gov.in](http://sikkimtourism.gov.in)

## BEST COUNTRY

### SWITZERLAND

Home to the Titlis, Jungfrau, and Matterhorn mountains, Switzerland is a natural wonder like no other. And our readers seem to agree, year after year. From Zürich to Bern to Interlaken to Geneva, every city here has something unique to offer, but not without the overarching beauty of nature following you around at all times. Be it hamlets or ski-resorts, museums or sprawling markets, exotic cheese or wines—the Swiss charm is inescapable. [MySwitzerland.com](http://MySwitzerland.com)



FROM LEFT: ROBERT HARDING/ALAMY; SHUTTERSTOCK

### SINGAPORE

Singapore (*in pic*) is the perfect example of a modern metropolis, with many eclectic discoveries awaiting you on its streets. An impressive public transport system, a sprawling zoo, a sea aquarium, an opera theatre, a science museum, botanical gardens—you name it, Singapore's got it! And we haven't even talked about its food scene—from rooftop bars to Michelin-star hawker stalls to secret speakeasy-themed bars, Singapore never runs out of culinary delights. [stb.gov.sg](http://stb.gov.sg)

## BEST GREEN DESTINATION

*International*



### NEW ZEALAND

With glacial fjords, expansive countryside panoramas, and rose-tinted skylines, this twin-island nation is an open playground. Take your pick of vineyards, endless hiking trails, skiing fields, and glowworm caves. New Zealand (*in pic*) also realises the need for conservation and acts upon it. From tree planting to weed removal and habitat conservation, plenty of projects are underway. [newzealand.com](http://newzealand.com)

### THAILAND

Despite tourists thronging its shores every year, Thailand has made a noticeable effort to preserve its beaches, rivers, mountains, valleys, and green cover. Outside the buzzing cities and towns lies Thailand's rural heartland—a mix of rice paddies, tropical forests, and hamlets. In the north, forests and fields are cradled by mountains with milky waterfalls and deep caves. Down south, limestone cliffs dot the cultivated landscape as well as the turquoise sea. [tourismthailand.org](http://tourismthailand.org)



## BEST CITY

*International*

### TEL AVIV

As Israel crops up on bucket lists around the world, Tel Aviv (*in pic*) makes the most of the spotlight. Glimmering coastlines, a buzzing art and culture scene, incredible culinary offerings, UNESCO-recognised architecture, and world-class nightlife—this gem of a city has been an unsung destination for long. Not anymore. Famously called the ‘Mediterranean Manhattan’, Tel Aviv is all that you can ask of a beautiful modern city with rich traditions. [visit.tel-aviv.gov.il](http://visit.tel-aviv.gov.il)

### VIENNA

Some cities don't get old. Loved for its ubiquitous Baroque architecture, the landlocked Austrian capital has more charm than meets the eye. An age-old coffee culture, a legendary musical history, and the most remarkable of museums—this is a city that shows you how to appreciate the finer things in life. It's not a surprise then that Vienna has been repeatedly ranked as one of the most liveable cities in the world. [wien.info](http://wien.info)

## BEST CULTURAL DESTINATION

*Domestic*

### PUNJAB

The high-spirited nature and jovial attitude of Punjabis seep into their state's cultural fabric as well. From colourful turbans to soulful poetry, this land of ghee and butter chicken leaves no stone unturned in highlighting its traditions. Starting with a walk around the revered, glistening Golden Temple in Amritsar, all the way down to the exotic Rock Garden in Chandigarh, each neighbourhood radiates faith, creativity, and joy. [punjabtourism.gov.in](http://punjabtourism.gov.in)



### CHHATTISGARH

Whether it's in the form of delectable dishes like *thethri*, *tasmai kheer*, and *khurmi*, or in the symphony of instruments like the flute, *manjira*, and *kartal*, a thread of simplicity weaves all the elements of Chhattisgarh (*in pic*) culture together. This land of terracotta handicrafts and bamboo arts swims in an ocean of ancient traditions that come together in the various museums here. The diversity of tribes, dialects, and communities offers an assortment of cultural offerings. [visitcg.in](http://visitcg.in)

## BEST HERITAGE DESTINATION

*International*

### UZBEKISTAN

From exquisite architecture to rugged landscapes, golden little villages to cities with towering minarets, the world's oldest madrasas to state-of-the-art museums, Uzbekistan's (*in pic*) treasures are widespread. While capital Tashkent lends insight into a modern Uzbek's life, Bukhara offers a slice of Central Asia's holiest city, and Khiva is a place stuck in time. At the heart of it all is the lingering essence of the ancient Silk Route, which makes Uzbekistan incomparable. [uzbekistan.travel](http://uzbekistan.travel)

### MEXICO

Straddling the Caribbean Sea on one side and the Gulf of Mexico on the other, Mexico is blessed with unique topography. But its heritage steals the spotlight. From Teotihuacán's towering pyramids to the exquisite Maya temples of Palenque, the country's pre-Hispanic civilisations have left behind treasures galore. In fact, the country is home to the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the world. [visitmexico.com](http://visitmexico.com)



*Domestic*

### MADHYA PRADESH

From one of Asia's largest mosques to a palace that resembles a ship, its architectural marvels make Madhya Pradesh (*in pic*) a charmer. The historic town of Orchha will leave you speechless, as will the Jahaz Mahal in Mandu. The state also boasts cave paintings dating back 30,000 years in the rock shelters of Bhimbetka that bear a striking resemblance to the Upper Palaeolithic Lascaux cave paintings in France. [mptourism.com](http://mptourism.com)

### ODISHA

The patronage of Kalinga kings and the craftsmanship of the locals of that era left behind a body of work that continues to intrigue tourists in Odisha. Apart from places of worship, a significant part of the state's history is reflected in forts such as the Barabati Fort in Cuttack and Asurgarh Fort in Kalahandi. Reasserting the state's claim to the title is the Sun Temple in Konark, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. [odishatourism.gov.in](http://odishatourism.gov.in)



*International*

**DUBAI**

A favourite of Indians—for shopping, exploring, and getting married—Dubai (*in pic*) offers the perfect balance of tradition and glamour. Also the first Middle Eastern city to make UNESCO's list of creative cities of design, it's worthy of its status as the region's crowning glory. Dubai has a reputation for breaking cultural notions. Any wedding here is sure to make a statement, and priceless memories. [visitdubai.com](http://visitdubai.com)

**MONACO**

The seaside luxuries of Monaco make it a clear winner among the most lavish wedding destinations on the planet. Intimate and classic, or grand and opulent—familial ceremonies, parties, and weddings are part of Monaco's affluent culture. Add to that the Mediterranean flavour it draws from its neighbours, and it's clear why discerning travellers have voted it as the Best Wedding Destination. [visitmonaco.com](http://visitmonaco.com)

**BEST WEDDING DESTINATION**

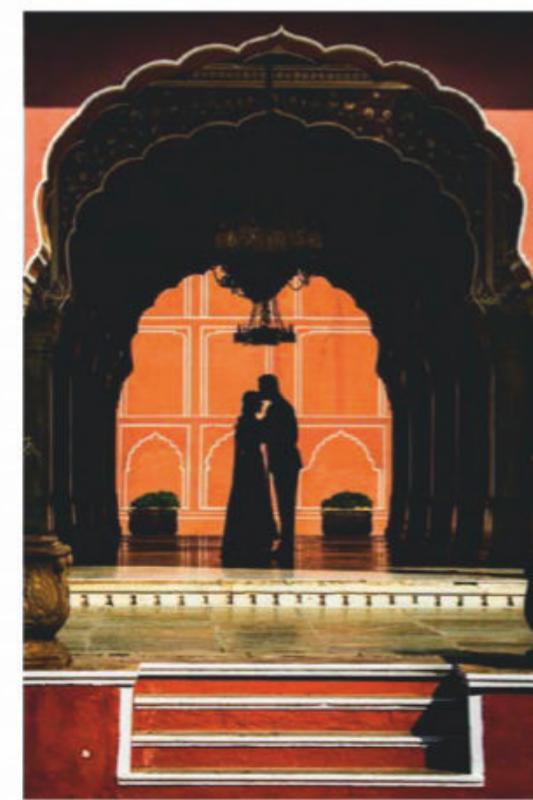
*Domestic*

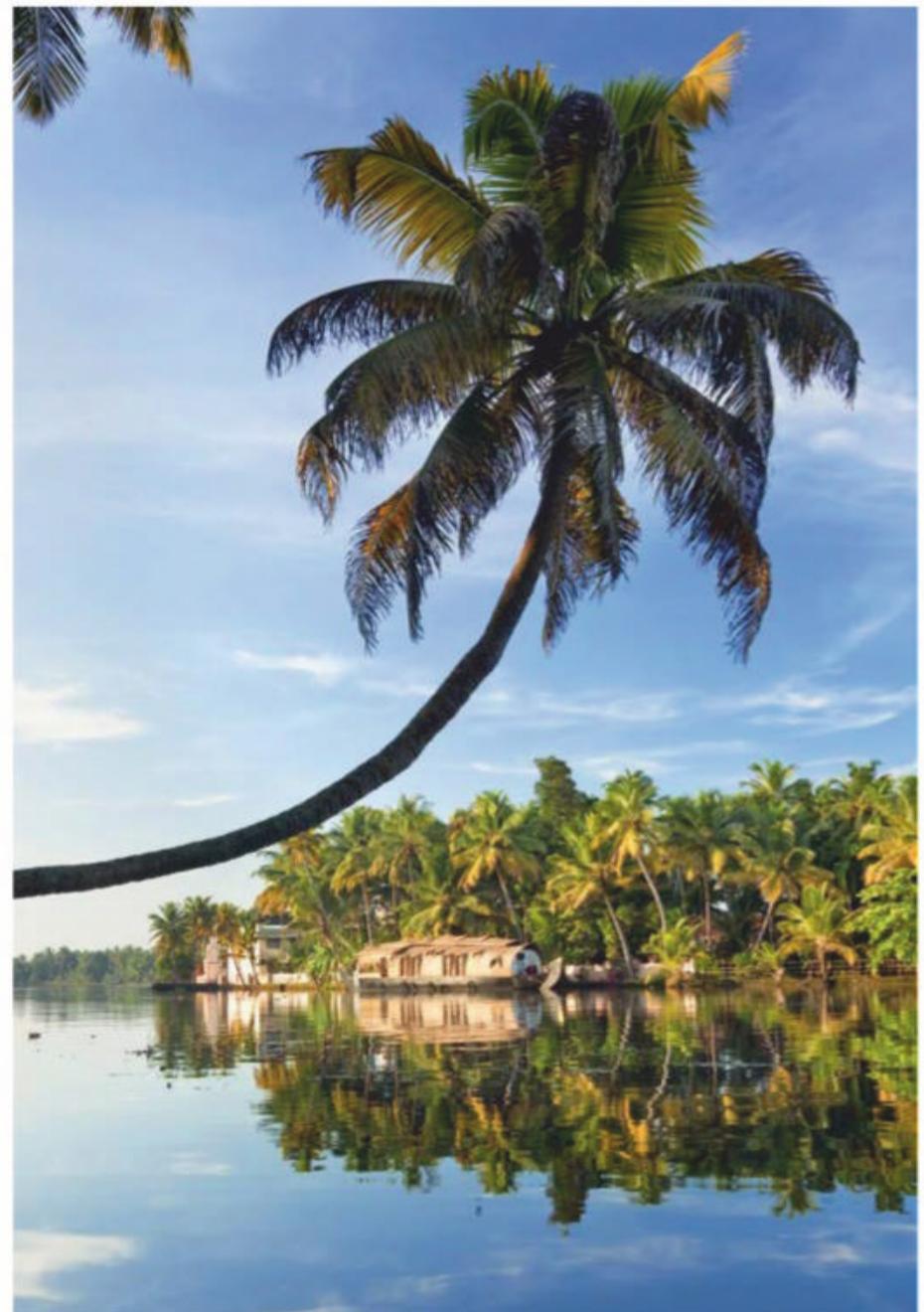
**GOA**

There's something eternally alluring about beach weddings, and Goa excels at them. Picture walking down the isle at a historic Indo-Portuguese church fringed by swaying palm trees with soft white sand under your feet, and the gentle waves cheering you on. Follow it up with scrumptious seafood platters while a local band nudges you to shake a leg and the Goan sun paints the sky in floral hues. [goa-tourism.com](http://goa-tourism.com)

**RAJASTHAN**

When a royal wedding is on the cards, Rajasthan (*in pic*) is an obvious choice. The grandeur of Jaipur's havelis, the magnificence of Jodhpur's forts, and the surreal lake backdrops in Udaipur have played dream venues to many celebrity weddings. And the state won big again this year with a record number of people choosing it as their favourite wedding destination in India. [tourism.rajasthan.gov.in](http://tourism.rajasthan.gov.in)





## BEST HONEYMOON DESTINATION

### *International*

#### **OMAN**

Perched on the Arabian Peninsula, with 1,700 kilometres of glistening coastline, Biblical landscapes, and charming Bedouin traditions, Oman offers a wide array of experiences. As the Middle East rises in popularity among holidaying couples, Oman has carved a special place for itself in the hearts of honeymooners. It harbours picturesque locales like the Al-Hajar Mountains, Sharqiyah Sands, Nakhal Fort, and more. [omantourism.gov.om](http://omantourism.gov.om)

#### **MAURITIUS**

A favourite among the romantically inclined, Mauritius (left pic) has unsurprisingly bagged the title for the Best Honeymoon Destination. With culturally engaging activities, tropical experiences, and idyllic beaches, this is an all-encompassing island destination with a simple way of life. From the bustling Port Luis to the beautifully secluded Savanne district, Mauritius surprises you, no matter how many times you return. [tourism-mauritius.mu](http://tourism-mauritius.mu)

### *Domestic*

#### **KERALA**

Kerala (right pic) offers a magical tryst with nature in its hill stations and backwaters. Places like Alappuzha are popular for romantic houseboat cruises, while mist-clad hill stations like Munnar and Thekkady are home to abundant flora and fauna and serene hilly landscapes. Add to this engaging experiences for honeymooning couples like coffee and spice trails, wildlife explorations, and thrilling treks. [keralatourism.org](http://keralatourism.org)

#### **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

Sheltered by great Himalayan ranges and fed by sparkling tributaries, Himachal Pradesh is home to some of the most serene, scenic, and fertile lands. From sweet spring waters to the elusive snow leopard, this green gem in the Himalayan Crown is a visual spectacle all year round. The splendid vistas of Shimla, Kufri, Manali, Kasol, Kullu, Dharamshala, Dalhousie, and McLeod Ganj are ideal for a romantic honeymoon in the hills. [himachaltourism.gov.in](http://himachaltourism.gov.in)

## BEST FAMILY DESTINATION



### *International*

#### SPAIN

Spain (*in pic*) promises a good time to guests of all ages and interests. Head to the plains of Andalusia and hike up the snow-capped Sierra Nevada, bask in the sun on the beaches in Costa Brava, find everything from theme parks to chocolate museums to a legendary football club in Barcelona, or gorge on the Spanish delights in the foodie paradise of San Sebastian. Spain has aptly won the Best Family Destination award. [spain.info](http://spain.info)

#### SOUTH AFRICA

From adventurous safaris to breathtaking beaches, historic cities to colossal national parks, a dramatic coast to exotic wildlife, South Africa is your best bet to plan a timeless family holiday. See the undying charm of Cape Town, go whale-watching in Hermanus, explore the coastline of Garden Route, and discover the wilderness at one of the many national parks and game reserves—there's no dearth of family adventures in South Africa. [southafrica.net](http://southafrica.net)

### *Domestic*

#### ASSAM

Synonymous with picturesque natural beauty and exotic wildlife, Assam has something for everyone. A mosaic of lesser-known cultures thrives here; vast tea gardens and warm hospitality add to the charm. From pilgrimages to wildlife sanctuaries, cruises on the mighty Brahmaputra River to the splendour of Ahom architecture, Assam is a paradise for vacationing families. [tourism.assam.gov.in](http://tourism.assam.gov.in)

#### ANDHRA PRADESH

With a blissful coastline and many Buddhist pilgrimage sites, Andhra Pradesh is a mixed bag of treats. This port state is home to many dams, verdant valleys, hills and ridges, meadows, caves, and national parks. Hi-tech theme parks and adventure parks are some of the state's latest additions to an already long list of attractions. It is the perfect family destination! [tourism.ap.gov.in](http://tourism.ap.gov.in)

## BEST SPIRITUAL DESTINATION

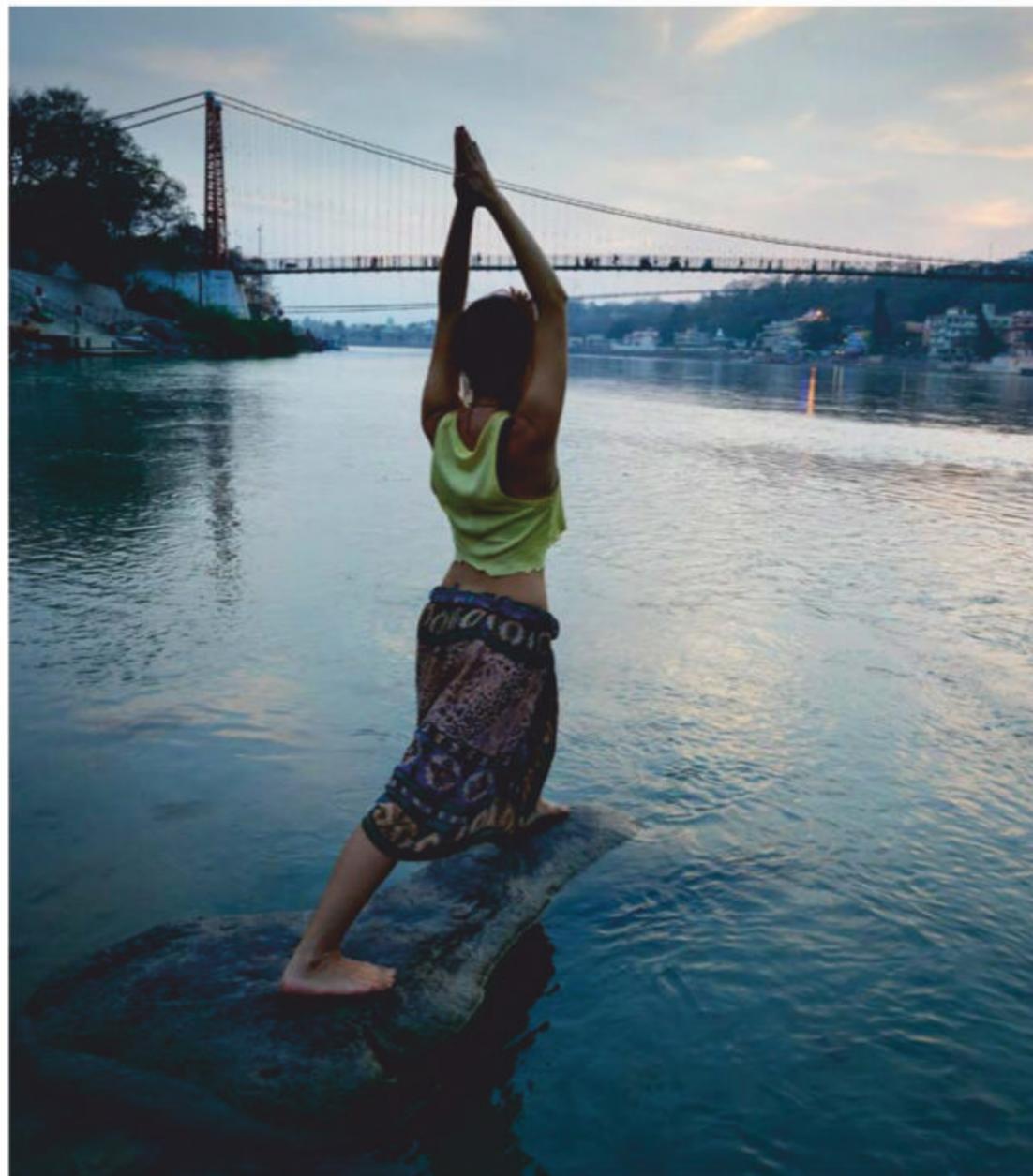
*Domestic*

### JHARKHAND

Despite the rise of urbanisation, Jharkhand has managed to stay true to its spiritual roots. Apart from the numerous temples in Ranchi, spiritual sites like Anjan Gram, Satsang Ashram, and Rikhiapeeth Ashram offer tourists a respite from the crowds and let them reconnect with their faith. There is also a growing demand to add Itkhori to the existing Buddha circuit, which includes Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar. [jharkhandtourism.gov.in](http://jharkhandtourism.gov.in)

### UTTARAKHAND

Also popular as *Devbhoomi*, or 'Abode of Gods', Uttarakhand (*in pic*) is home to major centres of faith like Haridwar and Rishikesh, and revered Sikh pilgrim sites, including Shri Hemkund Sahib and Gurudwara Nanaksar. Besides, when you have charming hill stations facing snow-capped peaks amid snaking rivers cutting through the lush dense forests, a sense of spirituality comes to you naturally. No wonder the state is home to so many yoga and mindfulness centres. [uttarakhandtourism.gov.in](http://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in)



## BEST MICE DESTINATION



*International*

### CALIFORNIA

The most glamorous US state, California (*in pic*), is hard to say no to. Whether it's artsy San Francisco or ambitious Los Angeles, the Golden State holds many options for that business conference. Besides the cities that offer the luxuries of five-star stays, the accessibility to leisure stops such as Las Vegas, Hollywood, and Arizona add to the contention of California as a MICE destination. And when it comes to food, the options are endless. [visitcalifornia.com](http://visitcalifornia.com)

### HONG KONG

With its electric skyline and lively spirit, Hong Kong attracts globetrotters for many reasons. Motivating work trips top that list. While a range of activities such as dragon boat racing, t'ai chi, tree planting, an organic farm experience, Cantonese opera, world-class theme parks, and dolphin-watching keep visitors entertained, the world-class hotels and restaurants in this city make it a preferred choice for business events. [discoverhongkong.com](http://discoverhongkong.com)



## BEST FOOD DESTINATION

### International

#### TOKYO

The fact that it has the most number of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world (a total of 230) surely helps Tokyo's (*in pic*) case, but this is not the only reason why the Japanese capital is reputed to be the ultimate food destination. You can go for the usual sushi and tempura, or sample an omakase experience while sitting cross-legged on a tatami mat, or enjoy Japanese sake over sashimi at an izakaya (Japanese-style pub). Tokyo is packed with delicious surprises. [gotokyo.org](http://gotokyo.org)

#### MARRAKESH

If there's anything other than artistry that the streets of Marrakesh spill over with, it has to be the city's rich culinary traditions. While classics like slow-cooked tagines are still very much in demand, Marrakesh has, over the years, upped its gourmet game. Native recipes from remote corners, fusion cuisine with contemporary flavours of Spain, France, and Arabia, a popular hawker food scene, fine dining restaurants and cooking schools—the Marrakesh table is always full of options. [visitmarrakech.com](http://visitmarrakech.com)

### Domestic

#### KARNATAKA

Just like the rich heritage of the state, the food in Karnataka (*in pic*) brings authenticity to the table. Be it the Mysore masala dosa, the kundapura koli saaru from Mangaluru, or the mouthwatering Udupi sambar, Karnataka has a plethora of traditional dishes to indulge in. A range of rice-based dishes, including *chitranna*, *vangibhath*, and *pulliyogare*, add to the seemingly never-ending menu here. [karnatakatourism.org](http://karnatakatourism.org)

#### WEST BENGAL

Besides being the birthplace of the world-famous Darjeeling Tea, West Bengal is also known as the land of *maach* and *bhaat* (fish and rice). Be it the syrupy white ball of happiness called *rosogolla*, or a delicious dose of *jaynagarer moya*, a seasonal dates and jaggery delicacy, this eastern state considers food to be an integral part of its culture. No wonder all Bengali festivals conclude with a hearty feast! [wbtourismgov.in](http://wbtourismgov.in)





## BEST LUXURY DESTINATION

*International*

### PARIS

The home of haute couture, Michelin-starred restaurants, and luxury hotels, Paris remains unrivalled in luxury. The French capital sings luxury with as much aplomb as it does art and romance. The art-lined boulevards, museums, classic bistros, and of course, the soaring Eiffel Tower are complemented by multimedia galleries, creative wine bars, and some of the most expensive real estate. [parisinfo.com](http://parisinfo.com)

### LAKE COMO

Shimmering at the foot of the Alps, Lake Como (*in pic*) is the hottest Italian destination right now. Picturesque scenery sweeps you off your feet, and luxury permeates its towns and lakeside villages, while ornate centuries-old villas, beautiful gardens, ancient churches, and plush hotels are common sights. Spend your afternoons at Bellagio's harbour-front shopping arcades, and dine under the stars by the lake at Cernobbio. [lakecomo.is](http://lakecomo.is)



## BEST DISCOVERY DESTINATION

*International*

### ALULA

Towering sandstone outcrops, well-preserved tombs, and ancient heritage sites dating back thousands of years—it doesn't get more offbeat than this! Home to Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hegra, AlUla is the newest addition to this landscape of wonders. Our November 2019 cover shoot revealed this destination to us, and we're mesmerised. [experiencealula.com](http://experiencealula.com)





## BEST ADVENTURE DESTINATION

*International*

### FINLAND

Head to Finland (*in pic*) when the regular vacation simply wouldn't cut it, for this Nordic country in Northern Europe brims with adventure. Seeing the Northern Lights and skiing in Lapland, kayaking in the Baltic Sea, cycling through Helsinki, spotting rare species in absolute wilderness, watching reindeer race in the snow in the remote yet breathtaking northern Finland, and hiking the most dramatic trails—adventure is synonymous with Finland. [visitfinland.com](http://visitfinland.com)

### PERU

For the longest time, Peru has been known as a cradle of ancient civilisations, but slowly, it is also becoming a hot destination for adventure enthusiasts—thanks to its wild topography and epic experiences. Take up the Inca trail that guides you to Machu Picchu, brave the Pico Alto wave—the biggest in South America—as you surf, go kayaking in the notorious River Cañete in Lunahuaná, dare to fly down from the canopies in Cuzco, and explore mysterious caverns that hold the secrets of ancient civilizations. [peru.travel](http://peru.travel)

## BEST AMUSEMENT PARK



*International*

## UNIVERSAL STUDIOS SINGAPORE

Universal Studios Singapore features many of Universal's most popular theme park attractions from around the world, including immersive lands based on DreamWorks Animation's *Shrek* and *Madagascar* properties. It also features specially-created experiences such as the world's tallest dueling roller coasters *Battlestar Galactica: HUMAN vs. CYLON*, the world's first *TRANSFORMERS* attraction, the world's first Sesame Street theme park ride, and more. Our readers have repeatedly shown their love for it through votes. [rwsentosa.com](http://rwsentosa.com)



## BEST NEW HOTEL

*International*

### THE WESTIN MALDIVES MIRIANDHOO RESORT

The Westin resort nestled on Baa Atoll's gorgeous island of Miriandhoo in Maldives spells out an uber luxury escape. With a turquoise lagoon to gaze at and exotic marine life at your feet, The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort offers secluded overwater villas with private pools and decks, holistic treatments at the wellness spa, and oceanfront restaurants serving global cuisines. The newly launched resort is ideal for a family vacation, with a dedicated kids club, playground, a children's pool, and kid-friendly menus. You can also try jet-skiing, parasailing, scuba diving with manta rays in Hanifaru Bay, and island picnics to make your Maldivian vacation memorable. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

*Domestic*

### THE ROSEATE GANGES

A vivid new 16-villa spa resort in the country, The Roseate Ganges makes for an unparalleled luxury retreat on the banks of the River Ganga in Rishikesh. It redefines opulence by virtue of impeccable design, architecture, and the hospitality it offers in a sylvan setting in the foothills of the Himalayas. The conscious measures that the brand has taken to produce an environment-friendly property earns it brownie points. [roseatehotels.com](http://roseatehotels.com)

### ITC ROYAL BENGAL

Launched in June this year, ITC Royal Bengal (*in pic*) is an ode to the cultural heritage of Kolkata. It is conveniently located at the intersection of the business district and the main city. Featuring 456 rooms and suites, including 82 serviced apartments, six dining destinations, 5,630 square metres of banqueting space, and Kaya Kalp-The Royal Spa, this is one of the most exciting launches of ITC Hotels & Resorts. [itchotels.in](http://itchotels.in)



## BEST BUSINESS HOTEL

*Domestic*

### THE PARK KOLKATA

The most preferred choice for business travellers arriving in the City of Joy, The Park Kolkata is influenced by the glitz and glam of the 1960s. The multi-functional banquet halls in the hotel are spread over an area of 1,114 square metres and combine cutting-edge technology with the slickest design. The two elegant boardrooms (16-seat and 20-seat) are ideal for smaller conferences. [theparkhotels.com](http://theparkhotels.com)

### LE MÉRIDIEN NEW DELHI

A five-star luxury hotel in the heart of the city, the modern high-rise building of Le Méridien New Delhi, with its striking mosaic of windows, is hard to miss. Its 299 rooms and 59 thematic suites offer a breathtaking view of the city. With over 1,877 square metres of event space split into six meeting rooms, two ballrooms, and a boardroom, the property is also an ideal destination for corporate meetings. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)



### PARK HYATT CHENNAI

Whether you are looking to organise a board meeting, a corporate get-together, or a social event, Park Hyatt Chennai (*in pic*) assures you a seamless experience. This luxury business hotel in Chennai is known for its 940 square metres of function space, which is ideal for conferences, meetings, as well as intimate gatherings. Conduct meetings amid the stylish surroundings of The Apartment Gallery, where state-of-the-art equipment meets a personal touch. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)



*International*

### THE OBEROI, DUBAI

With its downtown address in the business hub of Dubai, The Oberoi (*in pic*) leads the pack of upmarket properties that blend business with leisure. Offering uninterrupted views of the Burj Khalifa, it has a 24-hour business centre, 10 meeting rooms, an executive boardroom, and The Grand Ballroom, which is ideal for corporate events. Hold your informal meetings at The Lobby Lounge, or unwind at the spa after a busy day. [oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com)

### THE FULLERTON HOTEL SINGAPORE

Built as a grand Neoclassical structure in 1928, The Fullerton Hotel Singapore is now a stunning 400-key heritage hotel. Located in the heart of the city's business district, the hotel's Financial Centre is always abuzz with business travellers. Its seven function rooms, The Straits Room, and The Ballroom with theatre projectors, make it one of the grandest business hotels in the world. [fullertonhotels.com](http://fullertonhotels.com)



*International*

### THE FULLERTON BAY HOTEL SINGAPORE

The emerging 'bleisure' trend has found its new address at The Fullerton Bay Hotel (*in pic*) Singapore. Unique conference venues done in contemporary style, personalised business services provided by trained staff, clubbed with 100 luxe rooms with spectacular views of Marina Bay, dining experiences ranging from hawker classics to modern French cuisine, the award-winning Fullerton Spa, rooftop pool, and double-glass framed jacuzzis, make it the ideal bleisure destination. [fullertonhotels.com](http://fullertonhotels.com)



**BEST  
NEW  
BUSINESS  
HOTEL**

*Domestic*

### FOUR SEASONS HOTEL BENGALURU

The second of its name in the country, the Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru has set a benchmark in the industry in less than a year of its opening. Having emerged in the centre of the Embassy ONE development, in the heart of India's tech capital, the property delivers a dynamic experience that reflects Bengaluru's entrepreneurial spirit. Its vivacious 21<sup>st</sup> floor, featuring an Asian brasserie and a chic bar, is a major draw for the guests, and adds to its appeal as a contemporary business hotel. [fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)



### BEST BLEISURE HOTEL

*Domestic*

#### THE LODHI

An urban oasis perched in Lutyens' Delhi, The Lodhi curates bespoke experiences of culture, cuisine, wellness, and lifestyle, garnished with personalised service. The Silver Lounge here features comfortable armchairs and a tranquil ambience for meetings. Pair this with global cuisines at its various restaurants and the team of globally accredited Les Clefs d'Or Concierges, who assist you with everything from shopping to chartering a private jet, and you have got a winner in 'bleisure' travel. [thelodhi.com](http://thelodhi.com)

#### CONRAD BENGALURU

Rising 24 storeys above Bengaluru's Central Business District, Conrad Bengaluru offers 285 luxurious guestrooms and suites. The hotel also provides one of the largest meeting and events spaces in the city. With five dining options, the signature Conrad Spa, and a temperature-controlled infinity pool, Conrad Bengaluru sets new standards in business and leisure travel. [conradhotels3.hilton.com](http://conradhotels3.hilton.com)

## BEST HERITAGE HOTEL

*Domestic*

### THE LEELA PALACE UDAIPUR

Standing tall on the banks of Lake Pichola, The Leela Palace Udaipur (*in pic*) wins you over at first sight. Stay in the Lake Wing or the Palace Wing—the rooms are adorned with traditional Rajasthani art and craftsmanship. They also offer breathtaking views of the Aravalli ranges. The all-day restaurant, The Dining Room, brings an eclectic mix of cuisines from around the world. The hotel also has a walk-in wine cellar that is climate controlled. [theleela.com](http://theleela.com)



### THE IMPERIAL NEW DELHI

A masterpiece in Lutyens' Delhi, The Imperial New Delhi is ideal for a history fix. Stroll through its art-laden corridors and feel history come alive. The hotel has five distinct dining venues to take care of your gastronomic needs—while The Spice Route dishes out Southeast Asian fare, San Gimignano excels in Italian cuisine, and Daniell's Tavern whips up delicious pan-Indian cuisine. [theimperialindia.com](http://theimperialindia.com)

### ALILA FORT BISHANGARH, JAIPUR

Legendary among the heritage hotels in Jaipur, Alila Fort Bishangarh is a restored 18<sup>th</sup>-century fort that offers magnificent views of the countryside. The hotel is secluded, and hence, lets you disconnect. Add a little wellness to the mix with Spa Alila, which offers rejuvenating treatments and yoga classes. Experience the local life and traditions of Bishangarh, or explore the history of the fort on a warrior horse—the possibilities are endless at Alila Fort Bishangarh, Jaipur. [alilahotels.com](http://alilahotels.com)



*International*

### ÇIRAGAN PALACE KEMPINSKI

The only Ottoman imperial palace and hotel located on the European shore of the Bosphorus Strait, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Çırağan Palace Kempinski (*in pic*) is where heritage meets hospitality. With Baroque-style interiors, crystal chandeliers, a Turkish hammam, and a helipad, this former residence of sultans evokes the opulence of the bygone Ottoman era. [kempinski.com](http://kempinski.com)

### GALLE FACE HOTEL

Timeless grandeur welcomes you at the Galle Face Hotel in the heart of Colombo. Built in 1864, the heritage hotel sits on the edge of the Galle Face Green—the Sri Lankan capital's biggest seafront promenade. Redolent of the past, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century colonial villa has its own museum, replete with a 1935 vintage car. Weekly guided tours are held by the hotel's historian, taking you through the many stories the hotel has to tell. [gallefacehotel.com](http://gallefacehotel.com)



## BEST DESTINATION SPA

*Domestic*

### SHAMANA SPA AT GRAND HYATT GOA

Translating to 'balance' in Sanskrit, Shamana Spa at Grand Hyatt Goa is best described as a temple of wellness. The two-storeyed spa combines the best of Southeast Asian wellness principles with the time-tested Indian wisdom of Ayurveda. As the therapists' magical hands ease you into a relaxed state, the soothing reverberations of the Bambolim Bay's calm waters play the ideal lullaby. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)

### KAIRALI - THE AYURVEDIC HEALING VILLAGE

The essence of Ayurveda and Indian Feng Sui permeates each of the sun sign-inspired villas at Kairali – The Ayurvedic Healing Village. Lush foliage including coconut, teak, and mango trees, paired with streams and waterbodies flowing by the side of each room, adds to the positive vibe of the space, allowing one to slip into blissful tranquillity. Situated in Palakkad, the land of palm trees and paddy fields, gives this retreat an extra edge. [ayurvedichealingvillage.com](http://ayurvedichealingvillage.com)



## BEST DESTINATION SPA FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS

### THE OBEROI SUKHVILAS SPA RESORT, NEW CHANDIGARH

This spa resort is not just about a luxurious stay or fine dining, it is also your one-stop wellness destination. Set against the backdrop of the 8,000 acres of Siswan Forest Range and the foothills of the Himalayas, The Oberoi Sukhvilas Spa Resort (*in pic*) is designed to be your wellness escape. Be it a weekend retreat or a month-long detox, its personalised Ayurvedic and wellness programmes are complemented by accommodation in spacious villas and luxury tents, fine seasonal cuisine, and mindfulness activities in the surrounding forest. [oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com)



*International*

### INTERCONTINENTAL FUJAIRAH RESORT

Set on Al Aqah Beach against the backdrop of the Hajjar Mountains, InterContinental Fujairah Resort (*in pic*) offers a mix of Arabic hospitality and luxury. The newly launched O Spa by L'Occitane here takes one through the best of French and Arabic holistic traditions. Six treatment rooms, two couple suites, and a Turkish hammam make the resort an ideal wellness getaway. [ihg.com](http://ihg.com)

### KAMALAYA KOH SAMUI

Thailand's Koh Samui is the next big thing in the wellness world, and the holistic spa resort of Kamalaya offers the best of it. The sun-soaked retreat doesn't do strict rules and lets you heal at your own pace. Its 14 carefully-curated wellness programmes are efficient in helping you deal with ailments, from bad posture to anxiety. Centred around an ancient monks' cave, its idyllic setting helps you focus on your body, mind, and soul. [kamalaya.com](http://kamalaya.com)

## BEST LUXURY HOTEL CHAIN

### ITC HOTELS

Constantly upping the ante by offering a refined experience of responsible luxury, ITC Hotels is our readers' favourite luxury hotel chain. Taking inspiration from the country's rich heritage, the range of properties under its umbrella thrive on the concept of sustainability without compromising on luxury. While the flagship properties, such as the new ITC Royal Bengal in Kolkata, are steeped in history and grandeur, the group's chic lifestyle brand WelcomHotel in Vadodara and Aurangabad, among other cities, is all about modern elegance. [itchotels.in](http://itchotels.in)



## BEST LUXURY RESORT



### JUMEIRAH BEACH HOTEL

When there's a long stretch of private beach overlooking the Gulf, an on-site PADI dive centre and a fun-filled waterpark next door, there's not much left to ask for. Jumeirah Beach Hotel (*in pic*) wins hands down as one of the most plush addresses with its wave-shaped 26-storeyed tower, six swimming pools, sea-facing rooms, plunge pools, and 13 restaurants serving every cuisine you can think of. [jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com)

### THE OBEROI BEACH RESORT, AL ZORAH

Tucked away amidst one million square metres of protected mangroves, pristine white sand beaches, and azure lagoons, The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah is where you disconnect from the world. Plush glass-fronted villas with pools, a spa with open-air showers and private hammam, an 18-hole golf course, and an 85-metre infinity pool ensure a luxurious vacation. [oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com)



## BEST INDIAN HOTEL GROUP

### THE OBEROI HOTELS AND RESORTS

Founded In 1934, The Oberoi Hotels and Resorts operates award-winning five-star hotels and luxury resorts in India, Indonesia, Mauritius, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. The company owns 31 luxury hotels and two river cruise ships in six countries, and all of them are committed to curating unforgettable holidays for its guests. The group's commitment to excellence, attention to detail, and personalised service are what sets it apart from the other players in the industry. Be it a barbecue under the stars or a trek through a tropical paradise, the group's unique experiences have earned it a loyal list of guests and shelves full of accolades. [oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com)

## BEST HOTEL FOR WOMEN TRAVELLERS



### GRAND HYATT MUMBAI HOTEL & RESIDENCES

Spread over 10 acres, Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences (*in pic*) is a contemporary lifestyle destination with 547 luxurious guest rooms and suites, and 110 serviced apartments. The property has set new trends with innovations such as a dedicated floor for single women travellers. The 110 fully furnished apartments offer guests a stylish place to call home, even if for a short while. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)

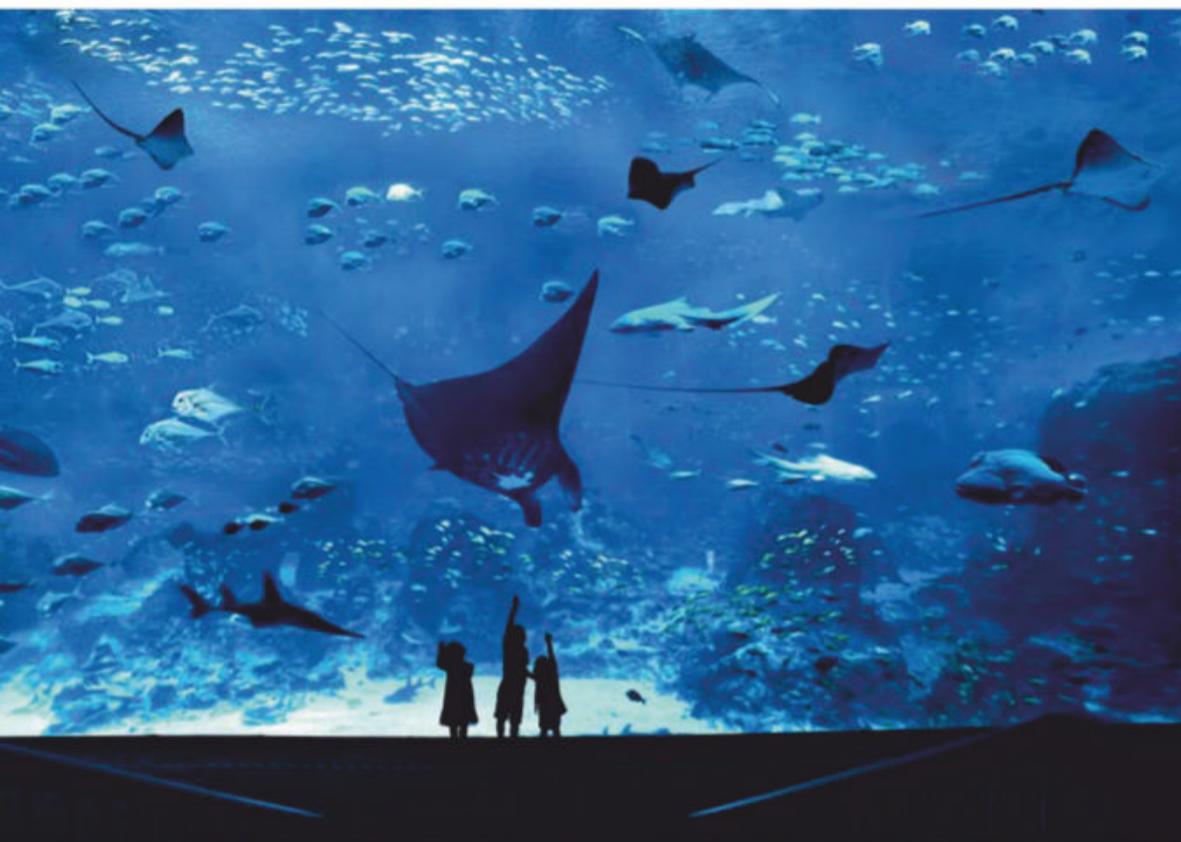
### THE LEELA AMBIENCE GURUGRAM HOTEL & RESIDENCES

This hotel, located at the Delhi-Gurugram border, is part of a lifestyle complex, offering 421 guestrooms, suites, and Leela Residences. The restaurants at the property offer innovative cuisines from around the world. The luxury serviced apartments in the complex, The Leela Residences, offer the cosiness of a home and the luxury of a hotel. [theleela.com](http://theleela.com)

## BEST INTEGRATED RESORT

### RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA SINGAPORE

Resorts World Sentosa is home to world-class attractions including Universal Studios Singapore, S.E.A. Aquarium, Dolphin Island, and Adventure Cove Waterpark. Complementing the adventure and adrenaline of its theme parks and attractions are six unique hotels, as well as award-winning dining experiences from renowned celebrity chef restaurants. The integrated resort also offers world-class entertainment, from original resident productions to concerts and public shows. [rwsentosa.com](http://rwsentosa.com)

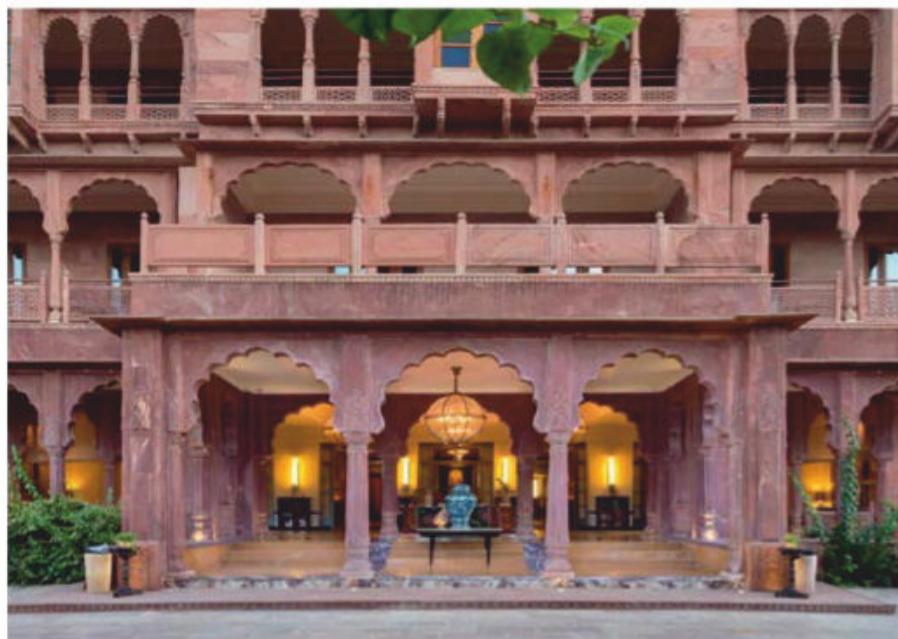


## HOTEL OF THE YEAR

### THE OBEROI, NEW DELHI

The discerning traveller's preferred hotel for frequent business and leisure trips to the capital, The Oberoi, New Delhi, enjoys an unrivalled location and reputation. With views of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Humayun's Tomb on one side and a sprawling golf course on the other, it perches on prime real estate in the heart of the national capital. Beyond the plush accommodation options and stellar dining venues here, it is the remarkable Oberoi hospitality that sets it apart and has earned it the Editor's Choice Hotel of the Year title this year. [oberoihotels.com](http://oberoihotels.com)

## BEST BOUTIQUE HOTEL

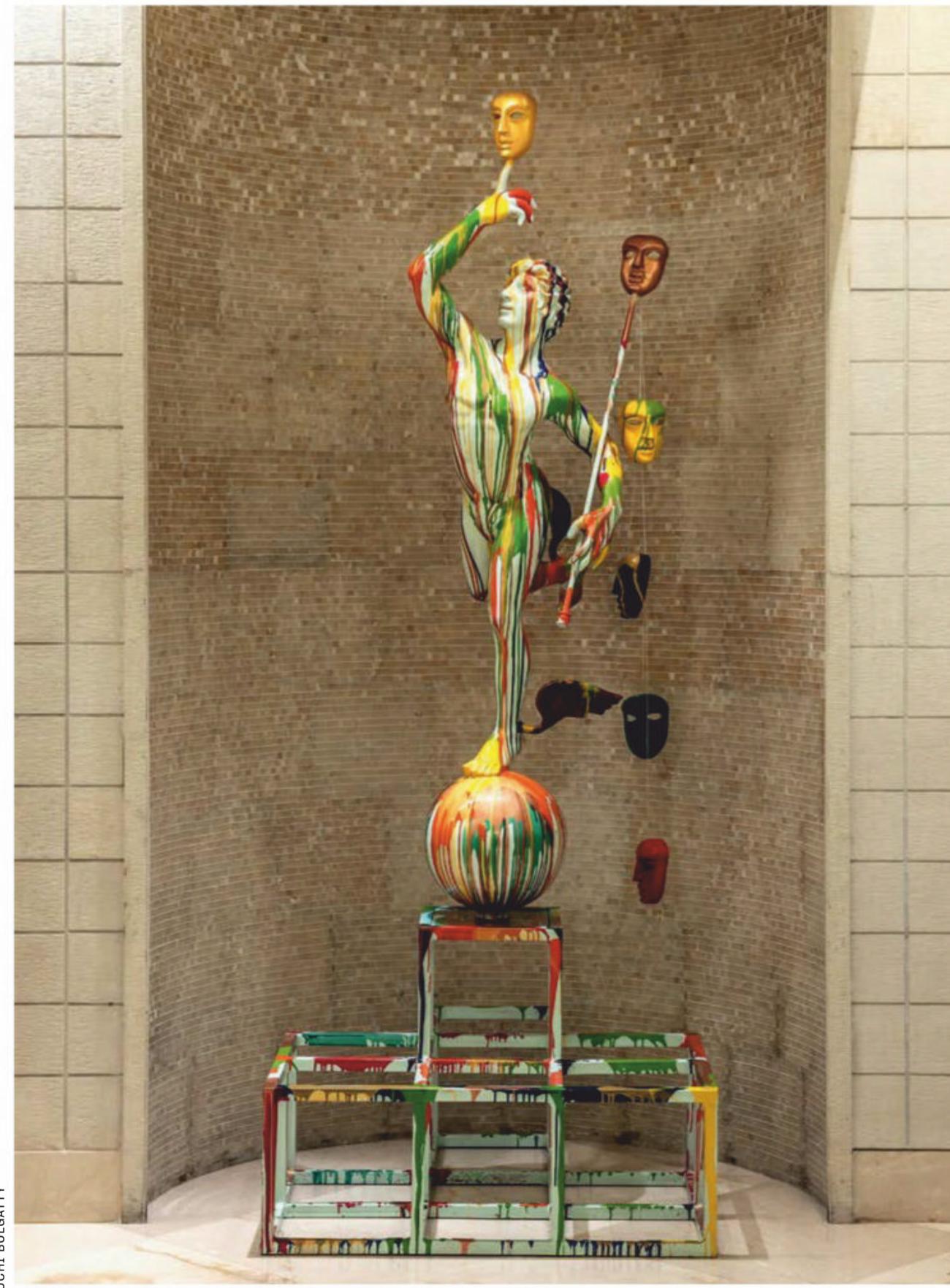


### NARENDRA BHAWAN, BIKANER

A grand residence in the heart of Bikaner, Narendra Bhawan (*in pic*) mirrors the travel experiences of its last maharaja, Narendra Singh. Dark caverns, rich fabrics, chiffons, and pearls—the interiors are inspired by the Art Deco style in Mumbai. While the guest rooms reflect Singh's patriotism, with an Indian theme running throughout, the Residence Rooms feature Portuguese tiles and a distinctly English colour palette. [narendrabhawan.com](http://narendrabhawan.com)

### SURYAGARH, JAISALMER

Suryagarh in Jaisalmer offers modern comforts while keeping its traditional ethos intact. The rooms are equipped with the latest amenities, and they look out onto wide sweeping vistas of the Thar desert. While the restaurants Nosh and Legends of Marwar treat you with a range of cuisines, Draksh beckons the thirsty desert traveller with its cooling white walls and fine spirits from around the world. [suryagarh.com](http://suryagarh.com)



FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF HYATT HOTELS; COURTESY OF GRAND HYATT KOCHI BOLGATTY

## BEST HOTEL GROUP

### HYATT HOTELS

Aiming to eliminate single-use plastic toiletries globally by 2021 is one of the recent reasons why Hyatt Hotels (*in pic*) is among the best hospitality groups in the world. With 20 brands and more than 875 properties in over 60 countries across six continents, the brand has carved a space for itself by not just being strong in the hospitality business but also implementing sustainable and social welfare practices through Hyatt Thrive—their corporate social responsibility platform. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)

### HILTON HOTELS & RESORTS

Offering a mix of authentic, contemporary experiences, the Hilton brand is one of the most trusted hospitality groups. One thing that makes hotels and resorts under the Hilton banner so different is that each property—they are sprinkled across 570 locations spanning six continents—is tastefully done in harmony with its surroundings. Hilton Hotels & Resorts makes sure that you have the time of your life and enjoy unforgettable stays in landmark destinations around the world. [hilton.com](http://hilton.com)

## BEST FAMILY HOTEL

### ALILA DIWA GOA

Lose yourself in a world of indulgence at Alila Diwa Goa. Be it your honeymoon, anniversary, or a family vacation, the property makes every occasion special with its intimate dining and spa experiences. The hotel also curates interesting experiences like 'Dine in the Dark', where you are blindfolded during a three-course meal. The environmentally conscious design and sleek architecture make a stay at Alila Diwa Goa delightful. [alilahotels.com](http://alilahotels.com)



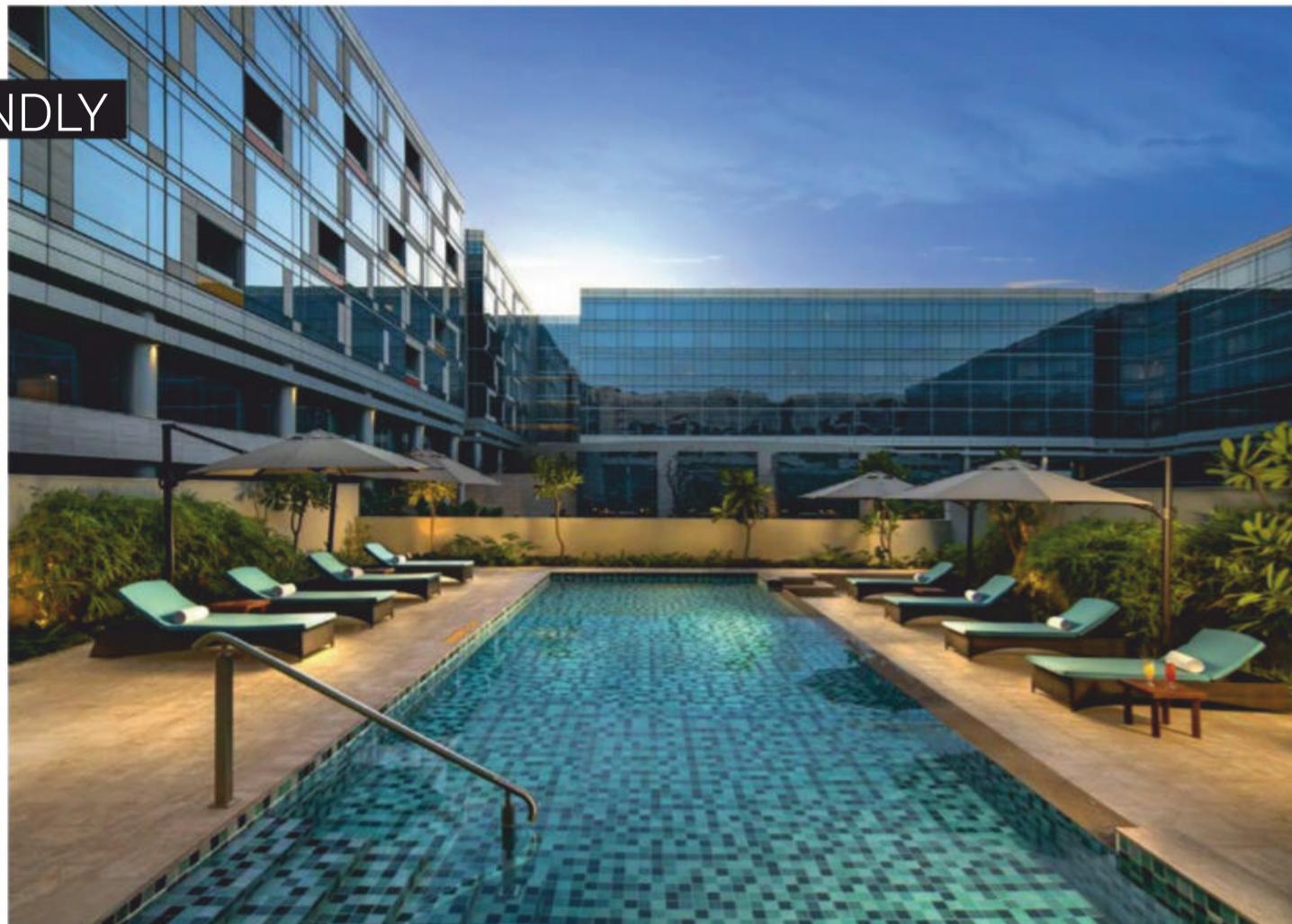
## GRAND HYATT KOCHI BOLGATTY

Overlooking the backwaters of Lake Vembanad, Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty (*in pic*) offers 264 luxurious guestrooms, including 38 suites and four villas with plunge pools and private access. Guests can spend quality time with family at the stunning outdoor swimming pool surrounded by lush gardens and overlooking Kochi's serene backwaters. The restaurants and bars at Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty share an inclination towards the dramatic, and are dedicated to making every meal of yours memorable. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)

## BEST ECO-FRIENDLY LUXURY HOTEL

### THE LEELA PALACE CHENNAI

Stay in one of the 326 spacious guestrooms and suites with a city or sea view at The Leela Palace Chennai. A property that constantly endeavours to incorporate sustainable practices, The Leela Palace Chennai has been a recipient of the Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. The opulent interiors blend effortlessly with cutting-edge technology. A melange of exotic dining options, meeting rooms, and premium lounge spaces make for an unparalleled experience, whether you're here for business or leisure. Indulge in holistic well-being at SPA as you try their variety of treatments, yoga sessions, and tailored spa cuisine menu. [theleela.com](http://theleela.com)



### ANDAZ DELHI

The capital's ever declining air quality has driven it home that the time to switch to green practices is now. If you are looking for a modern, stylish hotel that is also environmentally conscious, Andaz Delhi (*in pic*) is your best bet. While each room and suite showcases a unique piece of art that celebrates a reason to fall in love with Delhi, the washrooms are equipped with eco-friendly bathrobes and slippers. When you're here, do not miss out on a session at the Andaz Spa, which offers an innovative apothecary approach guided by your chakra energies and desires. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)



## BEST SUSTAINABLE LUXURY RESORT

### KUMARAKOM LAKE RESORT

Luxurious rooms, villas, and suites that blend Kerala's traditional architecture and modern comforts make up the Kumarakom Lake Resort (*in pic*). The aesthetically designed courtyards add to the charm of the resort. It also offers stays in traditional kettuvalloms, or houseboats, that offer stunning vistas of the Lake Vembanad. [kumarakomlakeresort.in](http://kumarakomlakeresort.in)

### NAMAH

The lush greenery of Jim Corbett National Park, the serenity of waterfalls, and the soothing aura of gorgeous temples—Namah in Uttarakhand makes sure your holiday is eventful. The resort has nearly 50 rooms, including superior rooms and suites. Feast on your favourite delicacies at the restaurant, Pratha, or unwind with a drink at the in-house bar, Boond. [namah.in](http://namah.in)

## BEST WEDDING VENUE

### ITC GRAND GOA RESORT & SPA

Nestled in serene South Goa, amid 45 acres of landscaped gardens, swaying coconut palms, and shimmering lagoons, ITC Grand Goa Resort & Spa (*in pic*) will make your dreams of a perfect wedding come true. It offers direct access to the Arossim beach and breathtaking views of tropical landscapes. There is also something for the history lover here. The property is inspired by Indo-Portuguese aesthetic and keeps the heritage alive in its 52 rooms and suites. The seaside lawns at the property is ideal for a magical wedding or reception. [itchotels.in](http://itchotels.in)

### INTERCONTINENTAL CHENNAI MAHALIPURAM RESORT

Stylish hospitality meets contemporary comforts at InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort, a property that blends world-class luxury with the renascent Coromandel style. Set along the alluring coastline of the Bay of Bengal, the resort was designed with the vision of hosting dreamy beach weddings. The suites and executive and standard rooms at the resort offer a tranquil retreat and views of a lotus pond, a courtyard, or the Bay of Bengal. [ihg.com](http://ihg.com)



## BEST HOTEL-POPULAR CHOICE AWARD

### THE LODHI

An elegant respite from the hustle-bustle of the national capital, The Lodhi surprises you in many ways. Spread over seven acres of an extensive parkland that also houses the landmark Lodhi Gardens, the hotel boasts some of the largest rooms and suites in the city. Private plunge pools and balconies are opulent touches in a city like Delhi. Also home to some of the most popular dining venues in the city and the country, The Lodhi has been a favourite of our readers for many years. [thelodhi.com](http://thelodhi.com)



## TRENDSETTER HOTEL OF THE YEAR

### ANDAZ DELHI

Andaz Delhi continues to charm travellers with its quirks. From artistic rooms and corridors to aqua yoga sessions to restaurants that employ only locally sourced ingredients—it has set trends in almost every aspect of hospitality. With a Kashmiri Gate-inspired entrance, a fleet of bright Ambassador cars and classic Jaguars, and an in-house coffee-table book titled *401 Reasons to Fall in Love with Delhi*, Andaz Delhi puts its host city on a beautifully curated exhibit. [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)

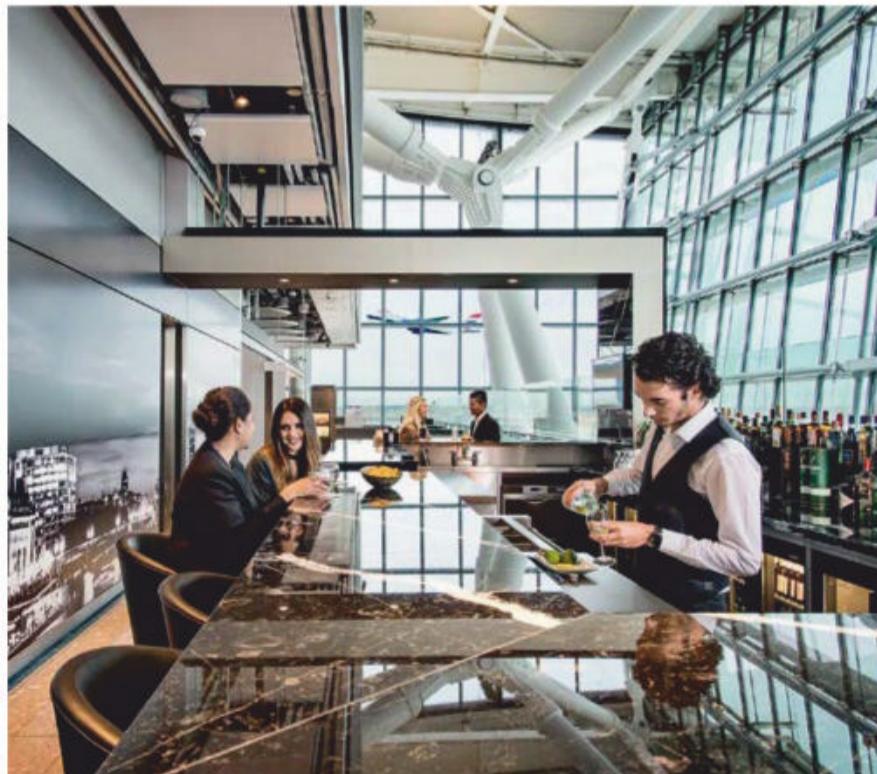
## BEST HOTEL LOYALTY PROGRAMME

### WORLD OF HYATT

Hyatt's loyalty programme offers its guests exciting reward points for every stay, spa, dining experience, etc. The points, in turn, can be spent on free nights at Hyatt hotels (*in pic*) and resorts or participating SLH hotels and M life Rewards destinations, unique experiences, airline miles, car rental awards, and more. Hot stone massage, breakfast in bed, in-room movies, parking, and transportation are just some of the benefits of World of Hyatt that our readers value. [world.hyatt.com](http://world.hyatt.com)

### CLUB ITC

Club ITC offers its guests a bunch of options when it comes to selection of rewards. Your points can boost your experience with enchanting stays, gourmet experiences, shopping sprees at WLS stores, frequent flyer miles, and more. They also provide food vouchers for a fine dining experience and a choice of goodies. An exclusive partnership with Marriott loyalty programmes lets you convert your Club ITC Green Points, so you can enjoy award nights at over 6,500 Marriott Hotels & Resorts worldwide. [clubitc.in](http://clubitc.in)



## BEST AIRPORT LOUNGE

### PLAZA PREMIUM LOUNGE

Plaza Premium Lounge (*in pic*) is the world's largest award-winning independent airport lounge network, with chic lounges present in Canada, UK, France, Brazil, Italy, and more. It offers all travellers a lounge experience. The group has 18 operational lounges in India. Catering to over 15,000 travellers in India alone every day, Plaza Premium focusses on personalised services. [plazapremiumlounge.com](http://plazapremiumlounge.com)

### VISTARA LOUNGE

The Vistara experience starts even before one boards the flight. Flyers often sink into the plush recliners, indulge in sumptuous food, and sip mocktails at the Vistara Lounge while they wait for their flights. The lounge also offers private rooms for families. Corporate travellers have access to a small meeting room and computer facility. With such comprehensive amenities, Vistara Lounge has become the popular choice of flyers. [airvistara.com](http://airvistara.com)



## BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

### CHANGI AIRPORT

Voted as the best international airport by our readers for many years in a row, Singapore's Changi Airport has done much to earn the repeat accolade. A destination in itself, the airport offers a complete package of world-class shopping, entertainment, wellness, recreation, etc. The Jewel Changi Airport is the latest addition to Singapore's glittering airport, boosting the airport's position as a leading air hub globally and its appeal as a stopover destination for travellers. [changiairport.com](http://changiairport.com)

### BEST INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE

#### SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Year on year, Singapore Airlines offers the most comfortable air travel around the world with fuel-efficient fleets of modern aircraft. World-class airport lounges, comfortable Business Class cabins, First Class luxuries, thoughtfully curated meals by internationally renowned chefs, and an assortment of entertainment options make flying with Singapore Airlines a pleasurable experience. [singaporeair.com](http://singaporeair.com)



## BEST DUTY-FREE SHOPPING

### KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Duty-free outlets like Eraman and The Zon make waiting for your flight at Kuala Lumpur International Airport a fun exercise. Products ranging from chocolates to liquor, books, cigarettes, perfumes, cosmetics, and fashion essentials are easily available at this shopping haven. The selection is high quality, and the prices reasonable. That's all you need from a duty-free outlet, isn't it? [klia.com.my](http://klia.com.my)

### DUBAI DUTY FREE

The duty-free operations at the Dubai International Airport is one of the world's biggest retailers. The stores are located at departure and arrival in Terminal 2, and at Concourse C in Terminal 3. These stores are home to high-end brands like Armani, Dior, Prada, Gucci, Bulgari, and Swarovski. One can also shop for a wide variety of cigarettes, cigars, and alcohol here. Dubai Duty Free (*in pic*) is your one-stop destination for all kinds of brands. [dubaidutyfree.com](http://dubaidutyfree.com)



### BEST ONE-STOP SHOPPING DESTINATION

#### OUTLET CITY METZINGEN

Over 90 exclusive designer brands under one roof, that too at a year-round discount of 30-70 per cent on retail prices, is what you get at OUTLET CITY METZINGEN (*in pic*). The outlets in this German complex cater to all age groups. Be it a designer handbag, men's apparel, toys, or high-quality business attire, OUTLET CITY METZINGEN defines the term 'one-stop shopping destination'. [outletcity.com](http://outletcity.com)

#### BICESTER VILLAGE

This Christmas, shop in style at the Bicester Village, a one-stop destination for all your festive requirements. Be it clothes, shoes, accessories, or gifts, this place—at the outskirts of Bicester, Oxfordshire—has everything. Tired of shopping and in the mood for a snack? Bicester Village's wide variety of cafes and diners cover it. It also offers discounts of up to 60 per cent on the Bicester Village card. [tbvsc.com](http://tbvsc.com)



### BEST INTERNATIONAL CRUISE

#### REGENT SEVEN SEAS

Regent Seven Seas offers the most enriching journeys on sea. Luxurious ships, exquisite meals, refined service, and exhilarating shore excursions—it ensures an all-inclusive travel experience. On a cruise, you get access to land programmes, beverages, open bars, lounges, restaurants, and much more. From encountering majestic wildlife to sampling delicious cuisines, the cruises promise memorable holidays. [rssc.com](http://rssc.com)



## HERO FOR EARTH

### AFROZ SHAH

Lawyer, UN Environment Champion of the Earth, and now *Travel + Leisure India & South Asia* IBA 2019 Hero for Earth, Afroz Shah is an inspiration. While most people still struggle to cut down on their daily plastic use, Shah spends his weekends cleaning up others' mess. He started in 2015 with a clean-up drive of Versova beach in Mumbai, and slowly formed a volunteer community. Since then, he has been regularly cleaning up beaches, and many personalities have joined his drives.



## LUXURY TRAVEL BLOGGER

### BRUISED PASSPORTS

Run by happily-married high-school sweethearts, Savi and Vid, Bruised Passports is a blog that inspires people to fulfil their travel dreams. The couple has travelled to over 80 countries, and with their blog and social media profiles, offers their readers details required to plan a trip— itineraries, accommodation suggestions, packing guides, and tips for budgeting. [bruisedpassports.com](http://bruisedpassports.com)

## FOOD BLOGGER

### SHIVESH BHATIA

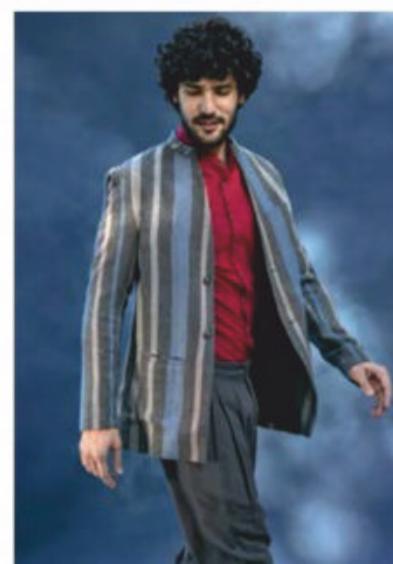
Shivesh Bhatia may be a Political Science graduate, but he's best known as a baker. Now 23, Bhatia started baking in Class 11, with a batch of burnt vanilla cupcakes. But he continued and has been unstoppable since. He started blogging in December 2014, and after around four years, he released his first book *Bake With Shivesh*, which was named after his blog ([bakewithshivesh.com](http://bakewithshivesh.com)).



## ECO-FRIENDLY FASHION BRAND

### NICOBAR

Since its inception three years ago, Nicobar has been taking small but effective steps towards sustainability. Eco-friendly fabrics like organic cotton, recycled wool, and green denim feature in their clothing; their home products use discarded tree roots, banana fibre, and bamboo. This Diwali, Nicobar collaborated with waste management company Eco Wise to recycle waste packaging at three pan-India stores. [nicobar.com](http://nicobar.com)



## PHOTOGRAPHY FOR A CAUSE

### DR LATIKA NATH

A wildlife biologist with a D. Phil in Tiger Conservation and Management from the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit and Christ Church, University of Oxford, Dr Latika Nath has been working for tiger conservation for over 25 years. She set up the Singinawa Jungle Lodge, and through the Singinawa Foundation, worked on alternative energy programmes for the villages in the region. And it all began with a passion for wildlife photography.



# SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

Subscribe for 2 years for ₹3,000 and  
get decaffeinated Satvik teas and essential  
oils from Seer Secrets, plus a saving of ₹600.



## GET IN TOUCH

**WHATSAPP**  
NO. **8218122745**  
TYPE T+L  
AND YOUR E-MAIL ID

**PHONE**  
**DELHI/NCR** 8218122745,  
0124-3083590  
**MUMBAI** 022-26041735/36

**COURIER**  
Burda Media India Private Limited  
Plot No. 378-379, Second floor,  
Udyog Vihar, Phase IV,  
Gurugram-122015, Haryana

**ONLINE**  
[www.burda.in](http://www.burda.in)  
[subscribe@burda.in](mailto:subscribe@burda.in)

## OFFER DETAILS

TICK	YEAR	NO. OF ISSUES	COVER PRICE	FREQUENCY	OFFER PRICE	YOU SAVE
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 Year	12-PRINT+ONE YEAR DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION FREE	₹1,800 + ₹900	MONTHLY	₹1080	₹720 + ₹900
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 Years	24-PRINT+ONE YEAR DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION FREE	₹3,600 + ₹900	MONTHLY	₹3000*	₹600 + ₹900*
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Years	36-PRINT+ONE YEAR'S DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION FREE	₹5400 + ₹900	MONTHLY	₹2700	₹2700 + ₹900

I would like to subscribe to Travel+Leisure India & South Asia

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Pin \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Landline \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed DD/Cheque No. \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_ Drawn On \_\_\_\_\_ For ₹ \_\_\_\_\_

In favour of Burda Media India Pvt. Ltd. For outstation cheques please add ₹10/-

**TERMS & CONDITIONS: SUBSCRIPTION OFFER:** This offer is valid only in India. Subscription will start with immediate effect. All disputes subject to competent courts in the jurisdiction of Delhi or Haryana only. Burda Media India Private Limited reserves the right to cancel, extend or discontinue the offer or any part thereof without giving any reason or prior notice. Burda Media India Private Limited is not responsible for any postal delay. Conditions apply.

\* Till stocks last.

**TRAVEL +  
LEISURE**  
**INDIA**  
& SOUTH ASIA

**WELLNESS  
& SPAS**



LECHATNOIR/GETTY IMAGES

**FOREST BATHING  
THERAPY**  
p. 108

**WELLNESS IN CHIANG RAI  
EXPERIENCE**  
p. 114

**SPA TREATMENTS  
REVIEW**  
p. 118

## BATHE IN THE GLORY OF NATURE

Ditch the city, escape to the wild, and bond with nature—with the Japanese philosophy of *shinrin-yoku*. **BY TANVI JAIN**



Forest bathing, referred to as *shinrin-yoku* by the Japanese, is the act of spending quality time in a forest.

**I**magine walking barefoot in a dense, green forest, breathing in fresh air, feeling moist grass under your feet, listening to the rustling of leaves, and the chirping of birds, and take in a melange of earthy aromas—isn't just the thought of this therapeutic?

To put it simply, forest bathing is the act of spending quality time in a forest. It works on the principles of mindfulness and meditation, takes you to another level of corporeal awareness, and helps you open all your senses to natural surroundings. Popularly known as *shinrin-yoku*, this phenomenon started in Japan in 1982 as a part of a public health programme, which sought to spread awareness about the health benefits of nature. The term *shinrin-yoku* was first coined by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. The purpose was to provide an antidote to technology and inspire people to protect forests.

It's not to be confused with running, jogging, or trekking; it's simply the act of taking a slow walk in the forest to soak up its medicinal qualities. With time, various studies across the globe have proven that forest bathing holds the key to solving many health problems.

Currently, Japan has around 62 forest bases and trails, and each one has a healing feature of its own. Almost two-thirds of the country is covered in forest. There are even experts to help you understand the concept of forest bathing and how it helps one connect with nature through all the five senses.



Improving the cardiovascular and immune systems, stabilising mood, reducing blood pressure, stabilising salivary cortisol and heart rate, and controlling diabetes, are some of the many health benefits that forest bathing offers.

Apart from Japan, the practice has gained popularity in countries like Sweden, UK, USA, and South Korea too, and has recently started trending in India as well. Adirondack Mountains in New York, Monteverde in Costa Rica, Waipoua Forest in New Zealand, and Kitich Forest Camp in Kenya are some of the best nature sites that offer forest bathing.

Meanwhile, in India, you can practice *shirin-yoku* in Satpura National Park in Madhya Pradesh, Zeilad in Manipur, Agumbe in Karnataka, Sacred Groves in Meghalaya, Silent Valley in Kerala, Binsar and Chopta in Uttarakhand, and Shola Forests in Western Ghats.

### HOW TO GO ABOUT IT?

All you need to do is find a trail in a forest, leave your phone, camera and all other gadgets, walk slowly, and let your senses guide you instead of the GPS. Just follow the various aromas and sounds of the woods. You don't have to worry about reaching anywhere because the idea is to walk

*Leave your phone, camera and other similar gadgets behind while forest bathing.*

*The purpose is to walk aimlessly without worrying about the destination.*

slowly and aimlessly, listening to birdsong, admiring the greenery and the sunlight peeking through the branches, and inhale the earthy aroma of the trees. This helps improve your hearing power, vision, and sense of smell. It also boosts your concentration and reduces stress. The calm of the forest gives you a break from the daily hustle and soothes your senses.

However, taking a forest walk under expert guidance is always recommended as the professional can help you find the right spot according to your health needs, keep





*We are designed to be  
healed by nature.*

SHUTTERSTOCK



*According to various studies conducted across the globe, people suffering from asthma, eczema, psoriasis, and osteoarthritis have shown major improvement after undertaking forest bathing expeditions.*

a check on your speed, and tell you where to stop and relax, and also enlighten you with its benefits.

There are various institutes in India that conduct forest walks under expert guidance. They also have special courses that delve into the concept of forest bathing. DElotus Advaya Holistic Health Solutions Pvt. Ltd in Rishikesh ([www.delotus.in](http://www.delotus.in)), Wellnessence-Holistic Healing, Conscious Living in Pune ([wellnessence.org](http://wellnessence.org)), and Swechha in New Delhi ([swechha.in](http://swechha.in)) are some of the institutes that conduct forest walks led by experts like Acharya Neeraj, Anna Zimmer and Navneesh Makkad, who strongly prescribe natural healing over Western medicine.

Holistic health guru, Acharya Neeraj, says, "The human body is designed to be healed by nature, but the problem is that we have made ourselves too distant from it. No one wants to understand and be close to nature anymore."

Biophilia hypothesis, which means love of life and the living world, suggests that human beings possess a tendency to create connection with nature. However, with increasing dependence on technology, this drive is declining.

Further throwing light on how forest bathing works, Neeraj adds, "As we take a walk in nature, we soak in phytoncide, a substance released by plants and trees, which affects our overall health."

Phytoncides are airborne chemicals that have antibacterial and antifungal qualities, and help plants fight insects. When we breathe in these chemicals, our body responds by increasing the number and activity of natural killer cells, or NK cells, which is a type of white blood cell that kills tumours and other virus-infected cells in our body. Studies have shown increased NK activity after just two-three days of forest bathing.

Decreased risk of heart attack, resistance to obesity, more energy and better sleep, mood-boosting effects, decreased inflammation, clearer skin, relief for sore muscles, lower risk of cancer, and faster recovery from illness are some of the benefits of forest bathing.

According to various studies conducted across the globe, people suffering from asthma, eczema, psoriasis, and osteoarthritis have also shown major improvement after undertaking forest bathing expeditions.

Terpene, an organic compound found in essential oils of some plants, especially conifers, has been proven to be effective against inflammation in brain, liver, and pancreas. Borneol terpene, found in cannabis, helps protect against degenerative brain diseases that stem from inflammation, like Alzheimer's.



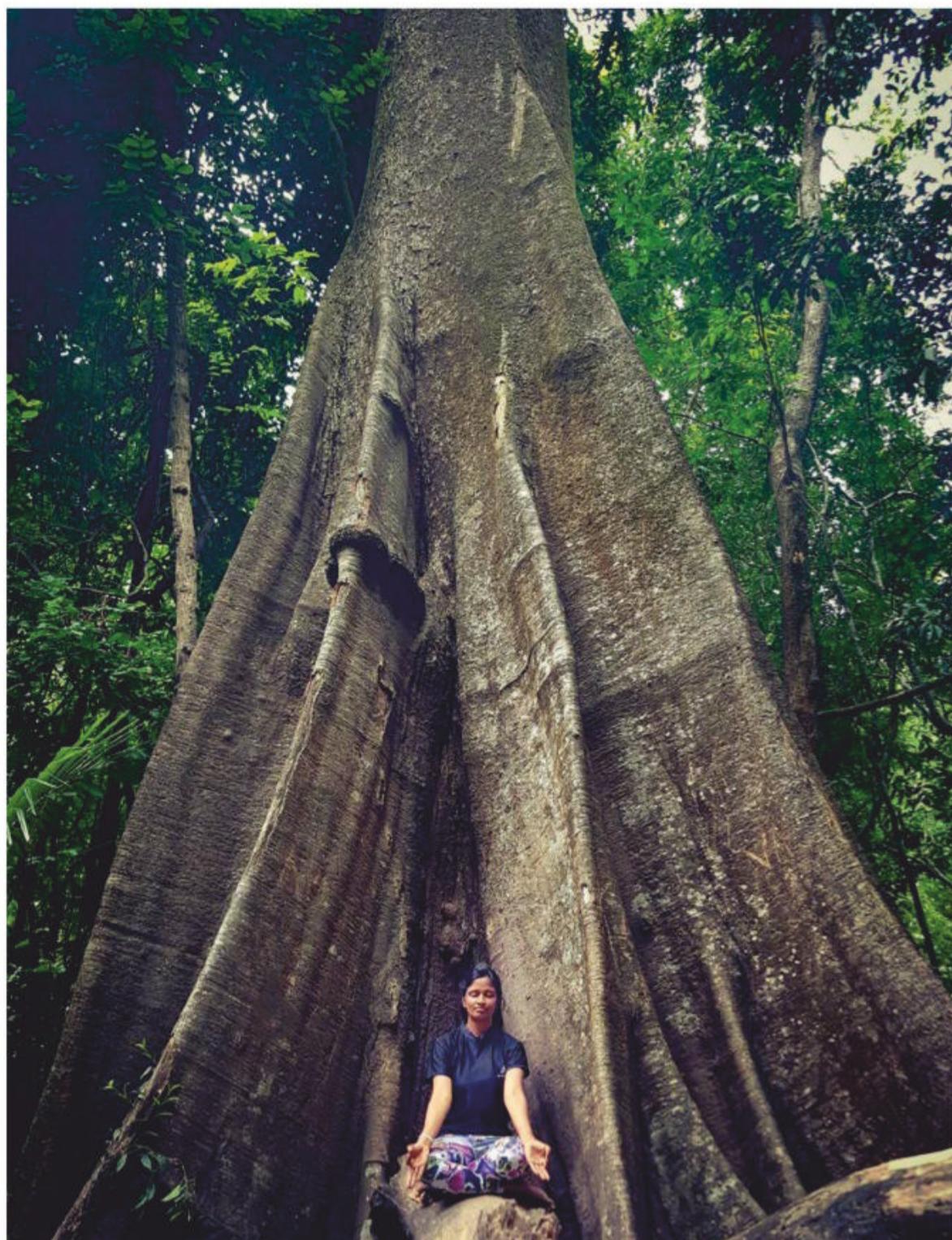
*Forest bathing is the need of the hour. Considering the dangerously rising pollution levels, and rapid tech boom, it's high time every individual adopts the practice and work towards spreading awareness about the power of trees and the need to conserve forests.*

"The sound of silence is so subtle that we can't register it. The idea behind forest bathing is to deploy all the five senses equally, which not only helps enhance them but also makes us more aware of our surroundings," explains Neeraj.

Sharing a personal experience, Neeraj recalls, "Around seven-eight years ago, I had a disease that almost crippled me. Different doctors had different opinions. So I decided to try forest bathing, and within three days, my condition improved. It's high time we start conserving our forests, otherwise no city will be worth living in in 10 years. The problem is that we feel we are superior to nature. We need to reconnect with nature and find a lost link between humans and nature."

In his book, *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*, immunologist and forest medicine expert, Dr Qing Li, says that the society suffers from nature deficit disorder, where people spend a majority of their time indoors and are unable to connect with nature. In the book, he describes how forest bathing can boost both health and happiness of a person.

Forest bathing seems to be the need of the hour. Considering the dangerously rising pollution level in our cities, and the rapid tech boom, it's high time every individual adopts the practice and works towards spreading awareness about the power of trees and the need to conserve forests. +



## BACK TO THE WILD

Some of our recommended green zones to experience forest bathing in India.

### Satpura Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

**Pradesh:** It is located in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh, south of Narmada River. The reserve comprises Satpura National Park, Bori Sanctuary, and Pachmarhi Sanctuary.

**Getting there:** Bhopal Airport (200 km) is the nearest to the park. The nearest railway stations are Itarsi, Sohagpur, Pipariya and Hoshangabad.

**Cost:** Per night cost of the three forest rest-houses in the reserve ranges from ₹1,500 to ₹3,000. [satpuratigerreserve.mp.gov.in](http://satpuratigerreserve.mp.gov.in)

### Agumbe Rainforest, Karnataka

It is located near Tirthahalli taluk in Shimoga district.

**Getting there:** Udupi (60 km), Shimoga (92 km), and Mangaluru (110 km) are the nearest railway stations. You can also take a flight either to Mangaluru (110 km) or Bengaluru (380 kms). There are frequent buses from Udupi, Mangaluru, and Shimoga, and a direct bus to and from Bengaluru.

**Cost:** A two-day forest walk is around ₹4,000 per person. If you are planning a stay, book a night at the famous 150-year-old Dodd

The Agumbe rainforest in Karnataka is nestled in the thickly forested Malenadu region of the Western Ghats.

Mane homestay, which was featured in a few episodes of the TV series *Malgudi Days*. [agumberainforest.org](http://agumberainforest.org)

### Mawphlang Sacred Grove, Meghalaya

**Meghalaya:** This sacred forest is located in the East Khasi Hills near Mawphlang village in Meghalaya.

**Getting there:** Mawphlang Sacred Grove is around 25 km from Shillong. The nearest airport to Shillong is Umroi airport (30 km), or you can book a flight to Guwahati (98.6 km).

**Cost:** You can enter the forest at a minimal cost of ₹20 per head and ₹40 if you are carrying a camera. And for just ₹300 per person, you can take an hour-long tour with an English speaking Khasi guide. [megtourism.gov.in](http://megtourism.gov.in)

**Silent Valley, Kerala:** Silent Valley is located in the South-Western corner of Nilgiris, around 20 km from Mannarkkad in Palakkad.

**Getting there:** While the nearest airport is Coimbatore International Airport (91 km), the nearest railway station is Palakkad Junction (45 km). It is also well connected by road to Bengaluru and Coimbatore.

**Cost:** The two-day-long Keerippara Camping package includes a forest trail where you are accompanied by butterflies and birds. It also includes an overnight stay in a tent for ₹2,000 per person. [silentvalley.gov.in](http://silentvalley.gov.in)

### Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarakhand

**Uttarakhand:** It is located 30 km from Almora in Kumaon Hills.

**Getting there:** The nearest airport is Pantnagar (157 km), located in Udhampur Singh Nagar district. Nearest railhead is Kathgodam (120 km) in Nainital.

**Cost:** Entry fee is around ₹150 per person per day, ₹75 for students, and ₹600 for foreigners. [binsarwildlifesanctuary.com](http://binsarwildlifesanctuary.com)

*Museflower Retreat & Spa is located on the outskirts of Chiang Rai in northern Thailand.*



## NOT YOUR USUAL WELLNESS BREAK IN CHIANG RAI

A holistic wellness sanctuary far from the city offers a physical and mental detox. **BY PAYAL DHAR**

**Y**oga retreats are believed to be great enablers in reconnecting with yourself, and for mental and physical detoxing. A retreat, in particular, is folded inside a lush, tropical landscape, far enough from the hurly-burly of urban life to make it seem like the middle of nowhere. I learnt two life-changing things about myself at Museflower's three-night yoga getaway—one, I'll never be a farmer; two, when backed against the metaphoric wall, I can swallow my debilitating dislike of worms, and escort them off the premises.

Museflower is located on the outskirts of Chiang Rai in northern Thailand. Not to be confused with the larger and busier Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai is a laidback place, where the most exciting thing that happens during the day is probably the changing of traffic lights. Yet, it houses some spectacular temples and museums—and if you

know anything about Thailand, you would know that 'spectacular' takes on a whole new meaning in architecture here—and at night, a variety of bazaars light up the sky.

But the city itself is a mere footnote in this story. I was headed to Museflower Retreat & Spa, a 'holistic wellness sanctuary' as per its founder and owner Tania Ho. As a small and exclusive eco-resort, Museflower offers balms for both body and soul through their spa and yoga retreats, and regular workshops that foster well-being and creativity.

Metalled roads end about two kilometres from Museflower, and by the time you get there, you have already disconnected. Since I arrived well before the 2 pm check-in, I

had plenty of time to kill. After the formalities—which included a briefing about my schedule with the rigour of a military training course—the receptionist Tony took me on a tour of the property. If I wasn't already enraptured by Museflower, the walk around the resort did it.

There are 16 guest rooms—or bungalows as they call them—arranged around a sprawling garden with a landscaped pond. Despite the careful tending, the space manages a sense of wild abandon. From my air-conditioned room and even from my personal sit-out, I could almost imagine I was camping out in the tropical wilderness.

The Butterfly Room is the usual yoga and workout venue, while the beautiful wooden lakeside Pavilion hosts various wellness activities. The lake itself—you're free to swim in it—features a floating deck with recliners to read or laze on, provided you are game to battle the heat and humidity by day and mosquitoes by evening. Across the lake is the Soul Food Corner, the dining area and kitchen, and a small common room. The latter is the only public space with air-conditioning apart from the gym. There is also an organic farm, but more about that later.

The other main Museflower landmarks are the spa complex, with a sauna and mineral bath, and the pool and gym complex. The Himalayan salt crystal pool here soon became my favourite place. You get used to the saltwater very quickly and you definitely get used to your eyes not stinging from chlorine.



*Museflower Retreat & Spa offers balms for both body and soul through spa and yoga retreats.*

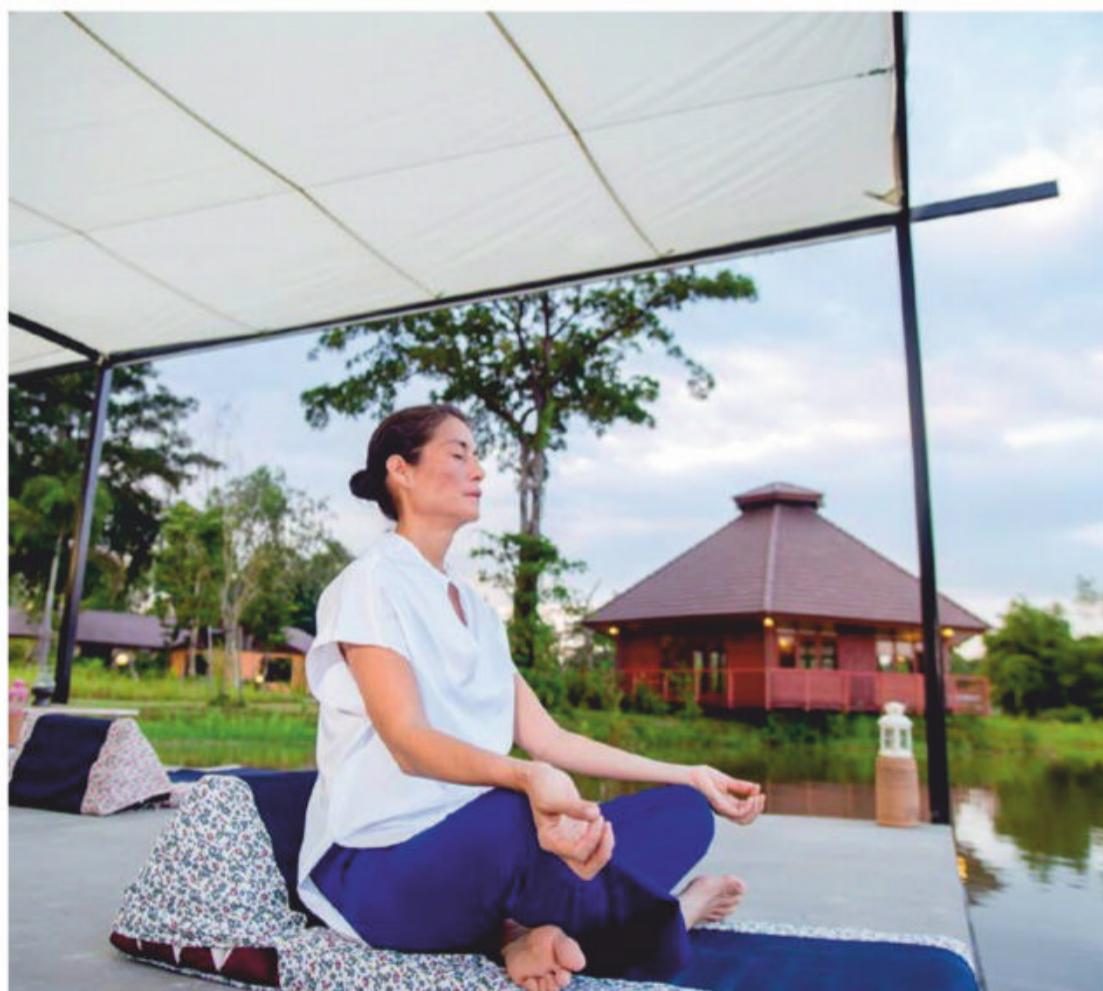
*The Butterfly Room is usually the yoga and workout venue at the retreat.*

My retreat package would have officially got underway with a group yoga class in the afternoon, but the 60-minute functional training session at 4 pm caught my eye and I asked for a switch. Our trainer was Watchararat Srichamroen—A for short—a yoga, t'ai chi, and qigong instructor among other things. I had already crossed paths with A during a workout session at the retreat's gym, and I should have known from the gleam in her eye that she had sized me up. My only workout companion, a Dutch woman, smiled gamely through the intense session, but bloodshed might have been contemplated.

Night falls early at Museflower, or at least it seems to, particularly because dinner, the last meal of the day, starts at 6 pm, and by 8 pm, the kitchen is closed. Famished after my 60-minute Tabata workout with A, I had an early dinner of noodle soup with mushrooms, a stuffed duck-egg omelette, potato chips on the side, a dragon fruit and persimmon for dessert, post which, I set out in the direction of my bungalow.

With minimal lighting in the outdoor spaces (to avoid disturbing the local creepy-crawlies and larger creatures), navigating the winding paths seemed akin to a tropical jungle adventure—looming shadows of mysterious trees, rustling in the bushes, calls of night insects, a spooky cat hissing at something unseen, and most of all, the paths indistinguishable from one another. In other words, I got lost and suffered the ignominy of having to call at the lobby for help. It was the closest I've come to losing my way in a forest, and it was quite enough.

Next morning, the sight of breakfast relegated my jungle trauma to the back of my mind. Breakfast was my favourite meal at Museflower, with the wholesome spread of fresh local fare, eggs to order, cereal, and



fruit. After the morning group yoga class and meditation, I was scheduled for a half-day sightseeing tour to see some of Chiang Rai's attractions, including the magnificent White Temple and Blue Temple, and the maverick genius of Thawan Duchanee at the Baan Dam Museum (or Black House).

Back at Museflower, frazzled from the heat and humidity, I was more than ready for my scheduled wellness activity—a body alignment massage at the magical hands of Kanlayanee Martthuean, or Jang as everyone called her. Imagine an hour-long stretching session where all you need to do is lie down. I had been nursing a deltoid muscle injury, so I had some trepidation about the way Jang coaxed, twisted, and pounded the kinks out of my body. But when she was done, I was able to touch the middle of my back with my left hand for the first time in four months. It was magical.

My morning yoga class the next day turned out to be a solo one, again in the company of A and her cheeky grin. I had expected the yoga to be traditional. Instead, A customised a lower-body balance and stretch torture, with a few yoga elements supplementing it. It was challenging, as was the walking meditation she introduced me to afterwards. This left me alert and charged, very unusual for a night owl like me, who is usually grumpy until lunchtime.



▲ *Metalled roads end about two kilometres before you reach Museflower Retreat & Spa.*

► *Museflower's organic produce goes into their homemade Lacto-Ovo-vegetarian cuisine.*

▼ *The kitchen rustles up delicious, yet healthy, fare thrice a day.*



That morning, Tony also took me on a farm tour, showing me their organic and aquaponic (out of commission for repairs at that time) vegetable farm. Kitted out in boots and gloves, sweating even at 8.30 am, he announced, "You are going to feed the ducks and then collect the eggs." Then he handed me a basket. We shall draw a veil over the proceedings, except to say that I collected a dozen eggs and made a satisfying Thai omelette with one of them for breakfast.

Museflower's organic produce goes into their homemade Lacto-Ovo vegetarian cuisine. Helmed by the versatile Dada and aided by the cheerful Mookie, the kitchen at the Soul Food Centre rustles up delicious, healthy fare thrice a day. They serve no bread, no refined sugar, and no additives. Local flowers and fruits are used as food colouring, and every morning a fresh pot of lemongrass, butterfly pea flower, or chrysanthemum infusions is laid out. You can get used to this diet—the fried greens, the noodle-and-vegetable soups, the coconutty desserts, and the variety of fresh fruit, particularly the yellow watermelon.



On my final morning at Museflower, I attended a yoga session by Eugenie Lenain, a freelance practitioner from Nantes, France, who has made Chiang Rai her home. Again, rather than traditional yoga, it was a deep hip-opening workout—slow, but challenging. Thus, loosened up, it was time for one final workout, this one for the mind. Founder Tania Ho, a trained wellness practitioner herself, led me and four other guests in a Soul Care Workshop, a gentle guided meditation to ‘connect with our ancestors’.

I could nit-pick about the technicalities of yoga or roll my eyes at ‘connecting’ with dead relatives, but underneath all my scepticism, Museflower turned out to be a surprisingly humbling experience. Travel writing, particularly about Asia, is laced with Orientalist overtones; frankly, it’s racist. At a retreat that was largely tailored to a Western, maybe white, clientele, being the only South Asian was an illuminating experience. Yes, I found some casual appropriation, but I also found a desperate need among my fellow retreaters for a kind of reaffirmation that they had travelled far, some literally, some metaphorically, to find. A hulking Scottish man in his 50s or 60s cried in a room full of strangers because the ancestral meditation reminded him of his lost connection with his parents. A Dutch woman travelling across Asia with her family had taken a few days alone to recharge. A Singaporean woman was on her annual pilgrimage-with-self. And I, determinedly sceptical yet unwittingly charmed by Museflower’s gentle soul. ♦

*Trained wellness practitioners hold group yoga sessions at Museflower Retreat & Spa.*

*The 16 guest rooms at the retreat are arranged around a sprawling garden.*

*You can see some magnificent temples and rice fields on a sightseeing tour from the retreat.*



#### **GETTING THERE**

Chiang Rai airport has daily flights coming in from Bangkok and Phuket, which are well connected to Indian metros. Museflower can arrange for airport pick-ups.

#### **STAY**

**Museflower Retreat & Spa** offers standard double rooms (with fans), and superior triples and doubles (with AC), including a superior room with waterbeds. Tariff starts at ₹4,550, including three meals and one wellness activity. [museflowerretreat.com](http://museflowerretreat.com)



## FIND CALM AMIDST CHAOS

The Park New Delhi's Aura Spa invites you to experience holistic healing, with an extensive treatment menu and emphasis on natural ingredients.

IT DOESN'T COME EASY, that feeling of absolute calm. At times, you need to ditch the clamour of city life and head to a sylvan retreat somewhere in the hills to reconnect with your inner self. And at others, a gem in the middle of the city, such as the Aura Spa, comes to the rescue.

Right in the heart of the traffic-choked capital, Aura Spa on the second floor of The Park New Delhi promises rejuvenation. While the walls are embellished with an assortment of shells, slate, and mosaic, everything else, from the floor to the furniture to the lockers, is made of dark wood.

The sight of aromatic candle lamps and brass *urli*s filled with rose petals soothes me as I step into one of the three treatment rooms. There's a long list of treatments to choose from—Ayurvedic, Hawaiian, Balinese, Classic Swedish, Esalen, Aromatherapy, and Reflexology—all of which have been modelled on the *panch-mahabhuta* concept that employs all five elements of nature to ensure holistic well-being. I pick the signature Aura massage—a fusion of Ayurvedic and European techniques. It helps rid the muscles of fatigue, and improves circulation.

As I lay face down, my masseuse, Kim, rubs warm sesame oil on my back, and my overworked shoulders begin to relax almost instantly. Moving on to my arms, lower back, and worn-out legs, she dedicates ample time to release tension and tautness, one knotted muscle at a time. As she starts working on my head with gentle but firm strokes, I focus on the soft music in the background. Knead, stretch, and repeat—the process goes on for an hour and a half.

Once done, Kim recommends a few morning stretches I can try to loosen up my muscles. Relaxed, I head to the sauna. The toasty teak interiors, the warm steam permeating my skin, and the fading aroma of rosemary—the 15-minute sauna session leaves me refreshed.

Post shower, I sit in a comfy lounge chair sipping on a warm cup of herbal tea while enjoying a view of Lutyens' Delhi. I feel healed and light. The feeling of absolute calm that I have been seeking for long engulfs me, and I make a mental note to come back for more.  
*theparkhotels.com*

From left: The therapy room at Aura Spa; while the walls are done up in shells, slates, and mosaic, the floor and furniture are made of wood.

### #TNLPICKS

Pair this treatment with the 35-minute long Simply Rice Scrub, for a full-body exfoliation. The blend of crushed rice, roses, and milk will leave your skin nurtured and hydrated.

## WINTER BLUSH

This season, add the warmth of pastel tones with hints of bronze and gold to your vanity.

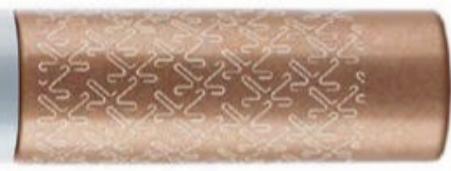
BY PRIYANKA CHAKRABARTI



Ultra HD Matte Lip Mousse, **Revlon**, ₹1,538; [amazon.in](https://www.amazon.in)



Nutritious Super-Pomegranate Radiant Energy 2-in-1 Cleansing Foam, **Estée Lauder**, ₹2,290; [estee lauder.com](https://www.estee lauder.com)



Metallic Lip Topper, **Kay Beauty**, ₹699; [nykaa.com](https://www.nykaa.com)



Météorites Light Revealing Of Pearls, **GUERLAIN**, ₹3,589; [harrods.com](https://www.harrods.com)



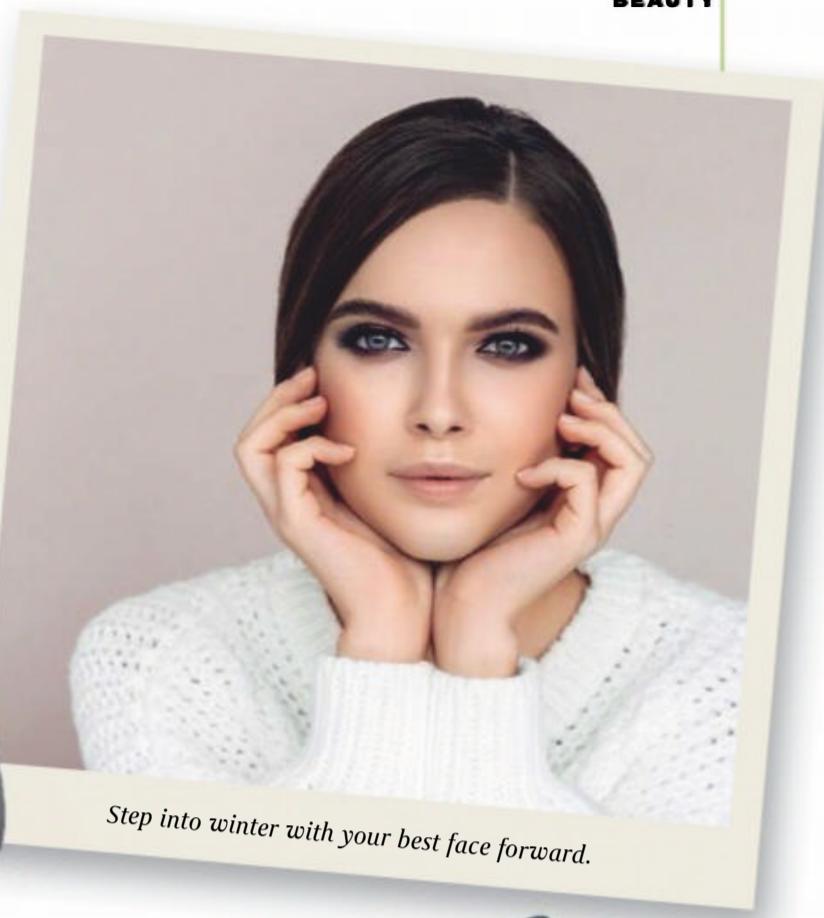
Pop Revolution Blurring Primer, **Kiko Milano**, ₹1,026; [kikocosmetics.com](https://www.kikocosmetics.com)



Happy Bigaradia Eau de Parfum, **Chopard**, ₹8,775 (40 ml); [harrods.com](https://www.harrods.com)



Monsieur Big Mascara, **Lancôme**, ₹1,789; [sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)



Step into winter with your best face forward.



Divine Nutritive Hydrating Lotion SPF20, **Lotus Organics+**, ₹595 (50 ml); [nykaa.com](https://www.nykaa.com)



Topaz Obsessions Eye Shadow Palette, **Huda Beauty**, ₹1,994; [harrods.com](https://www.harrods.com)



Vitamin E Quench Sheet Mask, **The Body Shop**, ₹375; [thebodyshop.in](https://www.thebodyshop.in)

# DISCOVER INDIA

SUBSCRIBE  
AND STAND A  
CHANCE TO WIN A  
**2-NIGHT**  
STAY AT  
**THE WHITE PEAKS**  
UTTARAKHAND

\*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY

Stay for a family of two adults and two kids (below 12 years of age). Breakfast and dinner included.



**WHY SUBSCRIBE?** ✓ RECEIVE YOUR COPY FIRST ✓ DELIVERY AT YOUR DOORSTEP ✓ NEVER MISS AN ISSUE



## WHATSAPP

NO. **+91 8218122745**  
TYPE DISCOVER INDIA  
AND YOUR EMAIL ID



## PHONE

DELHI/NCR 8218122745  
0124-3083590  
MUMBAI 022-26041735/36



## COURIER

BURDA MEDIA INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED  
PLOT NO. 378-379, 2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR, UDYOG VIHAR,  
PHASE IV, GURUGRAM- 122015, HARYANA



## ONLINE

[www.burda.in](http://www.burda.in)  
[subscribe@burda.in](mailto:subscribe@burda.in)

TICK	TERM	NUMBER OF ISSUES	COVER PRICE	FREQUENCY	YOU PAY	YOU SAVE
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 Year	6-Print + 6 Digital Edition (Free)	₹600 + ₹480	BIMONTHLY	₹540	₹60 + ₹480
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 Years	12-Print + 12 Digital Edition (Free)	₹1,200 + ₹960	BIMONTHLY	₹960	₹240 + ₹960
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Years	18-Print + 12 Digital Edition (Free)	₹1,800 + ₹960	BIMONTHLY	₹1,260	₹540 + ₹960

I would like to subscribe to Discover India

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/Office/Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Pin: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed DD/Cheque No. \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_ Drawn On \_\_\_\_\_ For ₹ \_\_\_\_\_

In favour of Burda Media India Private Limited. (For an outstation cheque please add ₹10/-)

I agree to be contacted on my contact numbers/email ID given by me for information/updation of my subscription  
(Discover India) and other promotions.

Yes

No

**TERMS & CONDITIONS** This offer is valid only in India. The subscription would start with immediate effect. All disputes subject to competent courts in the jurisdiction of Delhi or Haryana only. Burda Media India Private Limited reserves the right to cancel, extend or discontinue the offer or any part thereof without giving any reason or prior notice. Burda Media India Private Limited is not responsible for any postal delay. Conditions apply.

**\*STAY OFFER.** Terms & Conditions: All other charges such as flights, visas, transfers, and additional meals and beverages to be borne by the guests. Prize is subject to space availability and cannot be transferred or exchanged. Check-in time at at 2 pm and check-out will be at 10 am. The menu for breakfast and dinner remains fixed. The offer does not stand for a stay on long or festival weekends. Prize stay is valid for six months.

DECEMBER 2019

AUSTRALIA THE NEW WINES

OF THE NEW WORLD P. 122

SWITZERLAND FIRST TIME'S THE CHARM P. 132



ANDY NOWELL

*A short drive from Adelaide, Port Willunga Beach is a great spot for a morning run or picnic in South Australia.*

# THE NEW WINES OF THE NEW WORLD



Australia may be relatively new on the winemaking circuit, but it's got many tricks up its sleeve. The most important of them is sustainability. A whirlwind tasting tour of South Australia and Tasmania reveals organic and biodynamic wines, and a communal passion for innovation.

BY SUMEET KESWANI

*From left: Gemtree Wines in McLaren Flat employs sustainable practices on its vineyards, including a flock of sheep and alpacas to get rid of weeds; a tasting at the restaurant and cellar door of Mt Lofty Ranges Vineyard in Adelaide Hills.*



ANDY NOWELL

# ‘FIVE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD DRINK WINE EVERY DAY!’,

‘Benefits of wine unproven!’, ‘Wine can make you feel skinny, wise, and happy!’, ‘Beware! Red wine can lead to headaches!'

If I had an Australian dollar for every time I came across an article that claimed to have decoded wine and its effects, I would start a winery of my own. Personal experience aside, the claim that drinking wine makes you feel happy seems to have a scientific basis—curse that damn dopamine! The jury is still out, though, on wine’s health benefits. In my search for definitive answers—and the best wines—I embarked on a journey through the southern region of Australia this fall. Europe may have had a head start in viticulture and winemaking, but Australia is no bush-league.

## A MOUTHFUL OF MCLAREN VALE

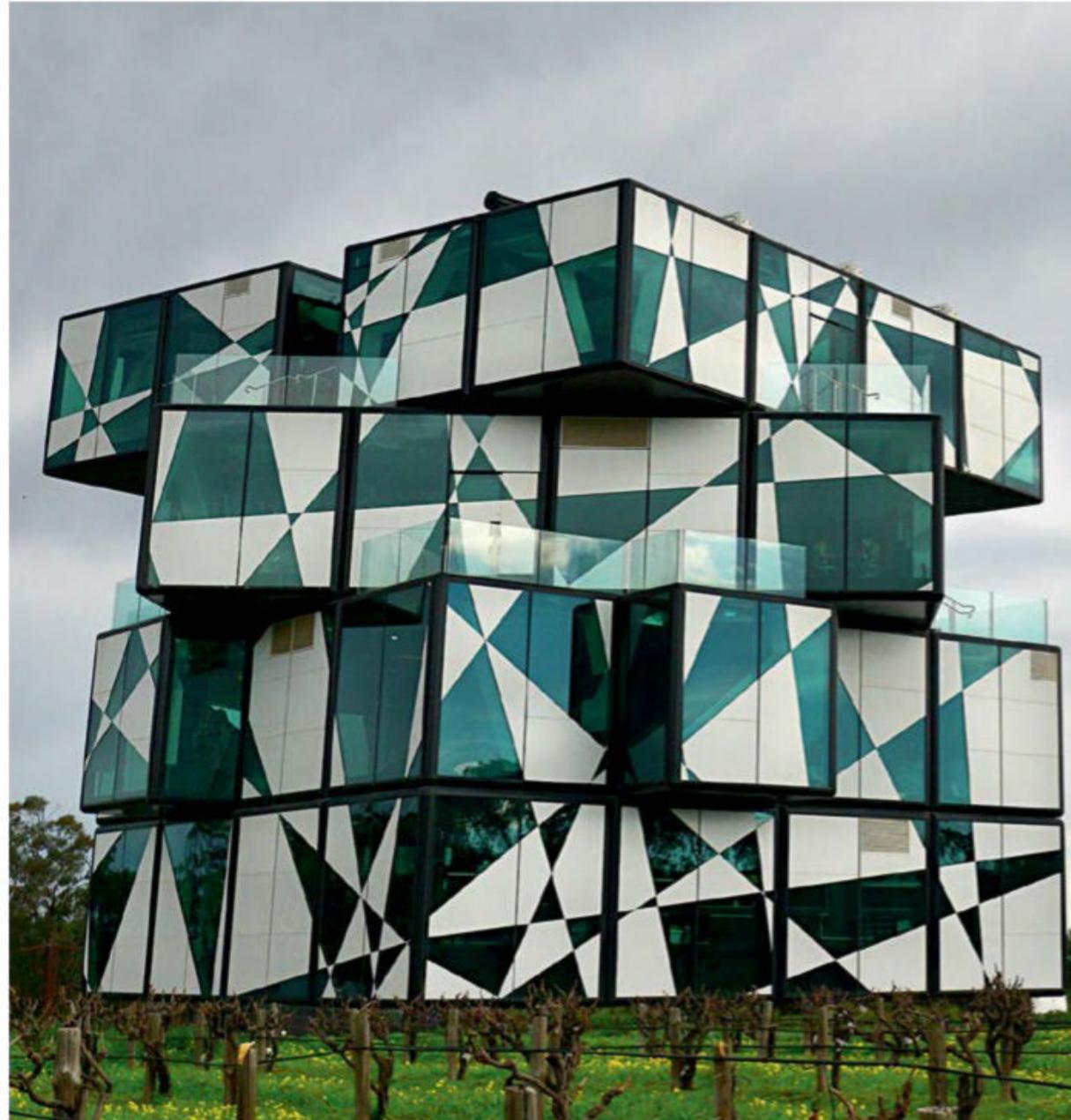
Australia has 65 distinct wine regions, and its winemakers aren’t afraid to break the mould. “Here, no technique goes untested and no convention goes unchallenged... we have a proud tradition of starting new traditions,” says Andreas Clark, CEO of Wine Australia. Nowhere is this aversion to convention more evident than the bewilderingly imaginative d’Arenberg

Cube in McLaren Vale, a 45-minute drive from Adelaide in the state of South Australia.

The fourth-generation winemaker at d’Arenberg Wines ([darenberg.com.au](http://darenberg.com.au)), Chester Osborn, first pitched the idea for the Cube—a five-storeyed museum and cellar door—in 2003. It was promptly laughed at by his family. The project finally took off in 2014 and finished three years later. Dressed in a Hawaiian shirt, Osborn literally sways from end to end on the pathway, showing me the right way to experience the reverse-perspective art installed at the entry of his dreamworld. Things only get crazier inside. On the ground floor, eclectic art installations depict the company’s values, like organic farming, its labels’ quirky names (the Money Spider is represented terrifyingly by thousands of spiders laying siege to a 360° video room), Chester Osborn himself (a vagrant accompanied by a dog on the streets of the USA), and Osborn’s two alleged cats, Ordinary Hepburn and Non-alcoholic Booze, who sound as surreal as Dali’s original artworks look on the second floor of the Cube. Some of the art on the walls was commissioned to local artists (for e.g. caricatures inspired by the winery’s unique label names), while some others were conjured

ANDY NOWELL (4)





From left: Amber Ochota of Ochota Barrels, with her kids, Anouk and Sage; the d'Arenberg Cube is a surreal cellar door in McLaren Vale, inspired by the puzzle of winemaking.

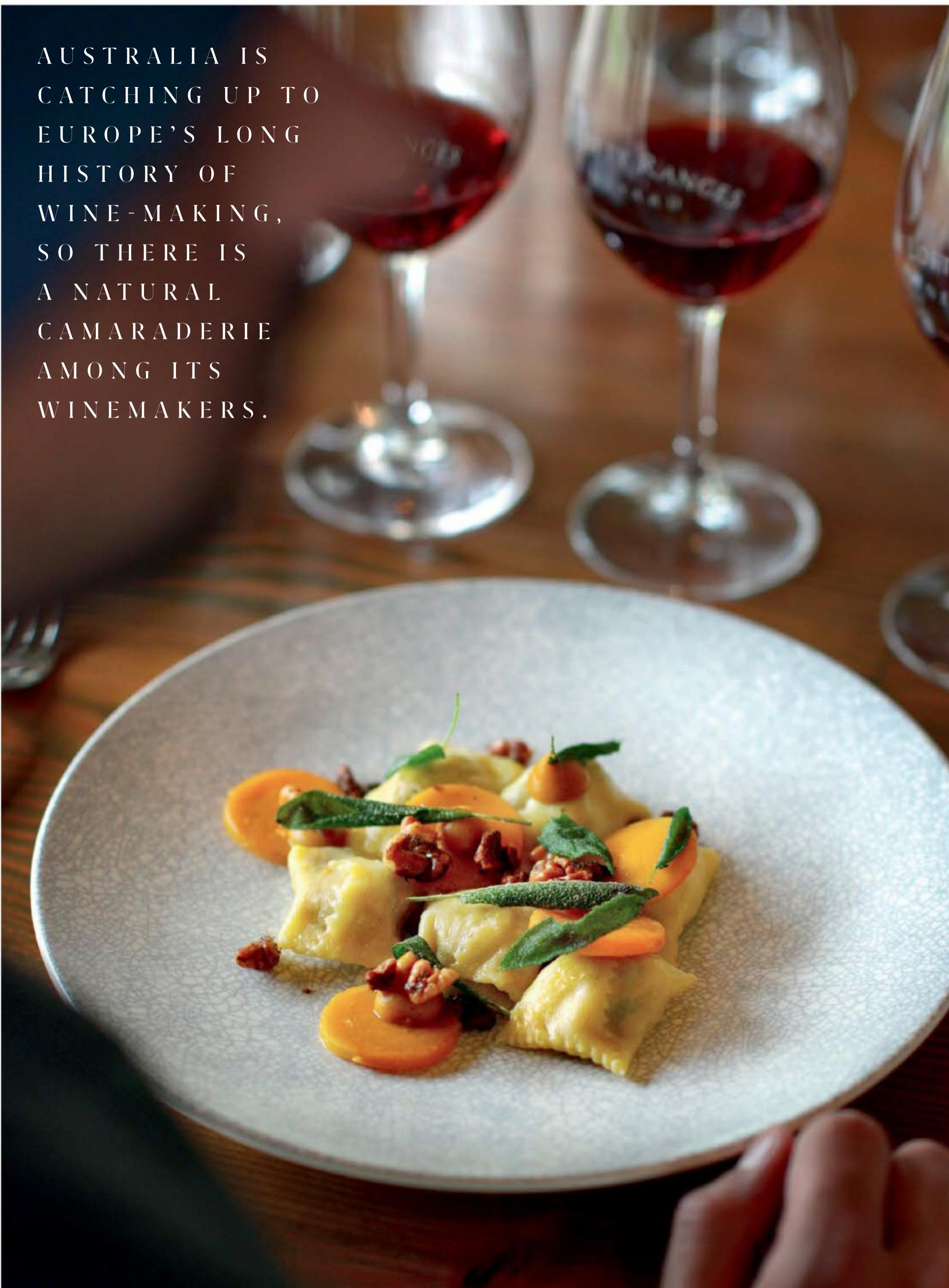
From left: The trebuchet at Wirra Wirra is used to hurl watermelons in a neighbouring paddock. It was a dream of its founder Greg Trott to have a medieval siege machine on the premises; true to its name, The Vineyard McLaren Vale offers a boutique stay in the middle of a vineyard.

up by Osborn himself, including a caricature of himself as Willy Wonka made with thousands of mini wine labels. An exhibit like this would be incomplete without futuristic installations: a joystick lets you explore a holographic projection of the region's terrain, and an AI system generates a dynamic portrait of Osborn's father, having been fed his photo and some works of the world's greatest artists.

By the time you get to the tasting room on the top floor, you expect the absurd at every turn. The bar does not disappoint—it's modelled after a mouth, with a CGI woman's shadow swimming across LED screens behind the bar stools. But don't let the quirky decor fool you; the bottles are all business. The heroes are Shiraz (The Dead Arm), Cabernet Sauvignon (The Coppermine Road), and Grenache (The Ironstone Pressings, a blend with Shiraz and Mourvèdre).

This does not come as a surprise given the area's Mediterranean climate. In fact, of McLaren Vale's 7,308 hectares of plantations, over 50 per cent are dedicated to Shiraz. But there is place for alternatives like Tempranillo,

AUSTRALIA IS  
CATCHING UP TO  
EUROPE'S LONG  
HISTORY OF  
WINE-MAKING,  
SO THERE IS  
A NATURAL  
CAMARADERIE  
AMONG ITS  
WINEMAKERS.



*The sustainable restaurant and cellar door at Mt Lofty Ranges Vineyard serves lunch in an intimate setting blessed with views of the vineyard.*

*The d'Arenberg Cube exhibits many quirky installations, some of which convey its organic practices.*

*Chester Osborn is the fourth-generation winemaker at d'Arenberg and the creative brain behind the d'Arenberg Cube.*



Nero d'Avola, Vermentino, Sangiovese, Zinfandel, and Fiano. McLaren Vale also takes its sustainability seriously. Apart from declaring and managing its underground water resource smartly, the vineyards of the region are tapping into treated reclaimed water.

D'Arenberg may have raised the bar in presentation, but there are wineries in McLaren Vale that still lean on good old tradition. Among them is Wirra Wirra ([wirrawirra.com](http://wirrawirra.com)). At this 1894 winery, not only do I get to taste the legendary Church Block, the first wine produced by the late Greg Trott under the label in 1972, but I also get to ring the huge Angelus bell at the property—its tolling heralds the beginning of a wine vintage—and fire a watermelon into a neighbouring paddock with a medieval siege machine. A chocolate pairing with Wirra Wirra's finest Shiraz vintages ends the tour on a bittersweet note.

While many vineyards in McLaren Vale have turned organic, Gemtree Wines ([gemtreewines.com](http://gemtreewines.com)) has taken



sustainability up a notch by getting their wines certified 'biodynamic'. Thus, synthetic fertilisers have been replaced by cow manure filled in cow horns—buried in the earth for months until it transforms into rich fertiliser; natural ground quartz is sprayed on the vines to strengthen their resilience against disease and to amplify the available sunlight; and a flock of sheep and alpacas are employed to eat the weeds growing beneath the vines instead of using sprays. It also means that the vineyard's farming processes are in sync with the lunar cycle—they plant, graft, and harvest according to the phases of the Moon (there are root days, leaf days, fruit days, and flower days). Even tasting is ideal on a fruit day, I'm told. While some in the business scoff at the belief that the Moon affects the quality of grape produce on Earth, the folks at Gemtree Wines are absolutely convinced that the extra cost and effort they've put in has begun to show in their wines—after 10 years of following biodynamic principles. Whichever side of the lunar debate you fall on, the core of biodynamic viticulture is a strong, intimate bond between the farmer and the soil, and that can never be a bad thing.

With a tasting at Gemtree's sustainable glass-walled tasting room—built with recycled materials and powered by solar panels—I bid adieu to McLaren Vale. It's time to explore the higher reaches of South Australia.

## HIGH IN ADELAIDE HILLS

After a brief stop at Cleland Wildlife Park, where I get to coddle a koala and feed free-roaming kangaroos and other marsupials, we drive on to Mt Lofty Ranges Vineyard ([mtloftyrangesvineyard.com.au](http://mtloftyrangesvineyard.com.au)) in Adelaide Hills for a comprehensive lunch spread. En route is the Lenswood Valley, a filmstrip of pastoral landscapes



*The soft white sand and golden cliff faces of Port Willunga Beach make for a great picnic spot, located 20 minutes from the vineyards of McLaren Vale.*

*Below: The cellar door of Moorilla Estate is plush and hosts a tasting session at the end of the winery tour.*

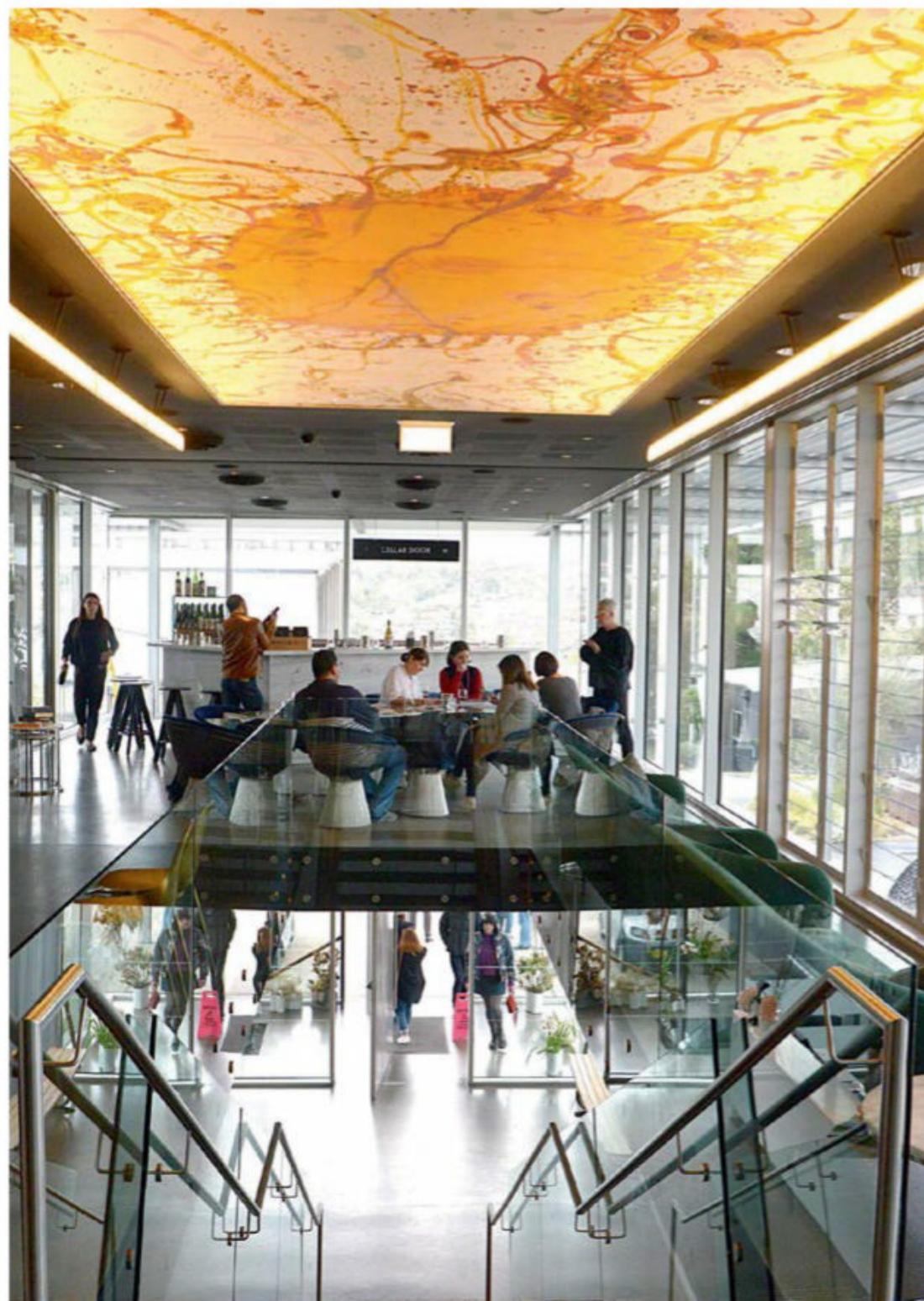
*Opposite, from left: Once the summer house of statesman Arthur Hardy, Mount Lofty House is now a boutique hotel with stunning views of Adelaide Hills; the lunar cycle dictates the timing of farming practices in biodynamic vineyards, like that of Gemtree Wines.*

FROM TOP: SUMEET KESWANI; ANDY NOWELL

pregnant with lush orchards of apple and pear. Even though the weather is cold and wet, the occasional cherry blossom hums a prelude to spring. The restaurant perches on a slope that nourishes the vineyard—rolling hills draped in vines and dotted with kangaroo families. The elevation of the region echoes in the wines on the table. A much cooler climate than McLaren Vale means I'm in familiar turf now—Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and sparkling varieties dominate the produce here. Say what you will of Shiraz, but it's too heavy-duty for my vegetarian palate!

However, the unique climate and terrain of the Lenswood wine sub-region dictate more than the grape varieties. Vines separated by as little as 150 metres grow differently. Gary Pearson of Mt Lofty Ranges Vineyard tells me he picks his grapes for the sparkling wines from the bottom of the slope, since that area is usually cooler by two degrees. "In fact, my vintages of 2017 and 2018 turned out quite different because of a much cooler year in 2017—the grapes took six additional weeks to ripen." The 2017 vintage is markedly paler, in hue and flavour.

The region is so sensitive that regulations are pretty tight. There are just over 50 cellar doors and 100 labels. The best red on the table is from the Shaw+Smith ([shawandsmith.com](http://shawandsmith.com)) stable. "Pinot Noir is the most challenging variety to grow and make, but when you get it right, it's the most satisfying of them all," says founder Martin Shaw. There is a bonhomie among the three winemakers on the table, and they don't shy away from sharing oenology secrets. But Shaw knows what he's doing. "I've been to Burgundy (France); the winemakers there don't share much with one another. But Australia is



catching up to hundreds of years of European expertise in a matter of decades; we need to share information, to elevate the quality of the region." Touché, Mr Shaw!

From fine dining in a sprawling vineyard, we hop over to a bare-bones shed that doubles as the winery and cellar door of Ochota Barrels ([ochotabarrels.com](http://ochotabarrels.com)). At the helm of this establishment are Taras and Amber Ochota, members of an emerging community in Basket Range town who believe in 'minimum intervention wines'. Simply put, their ethos of winemaking involves using wild yeast, allowing plenty of skin contact, no filtration, and addition of the bare minimum sulphur during bottling. I can taste the raw, organic process in a wine called Home, which Amber Ochota squeezes out of a barrel. Her choice of label name becomes clearer when her two kids, Anouk and Sage, and rescue dog, Elska, barge into the shed—and our hearts. Inside the warmth of the Ochotas' cottage, a structure that dates back to the 1800s, two cats, named Red and Zinfandel, are already tucked in for the night.

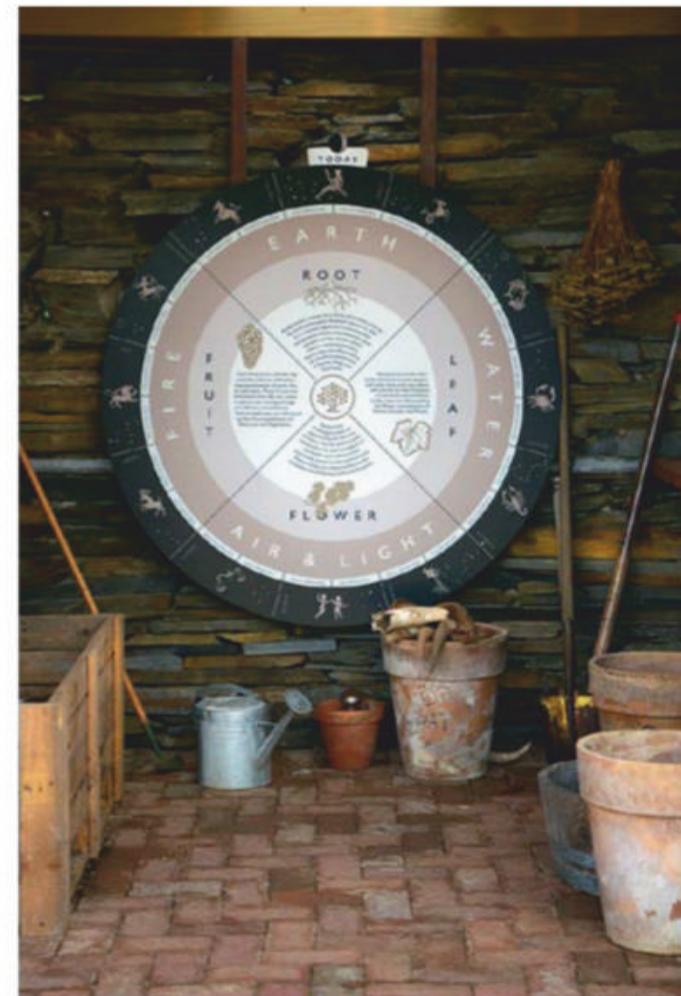
In a smug reply to Amber's wine, Home, her husband Taras has made a starkly different Pinot called Impeccable Disorder. Amber recalls their love story with the blush of a teenager. The two opposites met at an Adelaide pub over 21 years ago, and bonded over their VW Kombi Vans. They started this winery in 2011, and five years later, began whipping up pizzas in an old, abandoned church in Uraidla, a little ways down the road. Today, the restaurant is poetically called Lost in a

Forest; it hosts our last meal of Adelaide Hills. A meal full of familial love and a communal passion for wine.

## TRYST WITH TASMANIA

A connecting domestic flight takes me further down south, over the 240-kilometre stretch of Bass Strait, to the wild and untamed island state of Tasmania. Over a third of the state's area is covered with National Parks that brim with rare wildlife species, but I am here to check out the wines. You'd be forgiven to assume that Tasmania is the poorer cousin of Hunter Valley and the like in mainland Australia. But, in fact, Tasmania's first vineyard was planted in 1823 near Hobart, and it was vine cuttings from this island that produced the first recorded vines in Hunter Valley, Victoria, and South Australia. While almost 95 per cent of the wine produced here is sold within Australia, there are 95 cellar doors to give visitors a taste of the region's cool-climate wines: Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Pinot Noir, and sparkling varieties.

The first stop is Moorilla Estate ([moorilla.com.au](http://moorilla.com.au)) on the Berriedale Peninsula. Before I get a tour or tasting, I tumble down a rabbit hole and end up in the dark halls of MONA (Museum of Old and New Art; [mona.net.au](http://mona.net.au)), located on the winery estate; it houses a unique, if bleak, private collection of art. From ancient Egyptian sarcophaguses to modern art to immersive installations to hard-hitting social commentary, the David Walsh





Ochota Barrels, the winery, is based in a shed near the family's cottage in Basket Range.

collection is eclectic and eccentric. There is even 'a shit machine' in there, which is exactly what it sounds like.

The winery welcomes me with the most delightful sparkling rosé of the trip. A guided tour takes me through the history of Moorilla Estate, which owes its existence to an Italian textile merchant, Claudio Alcorso. Alcorso purchased a 19-hectare plot of land in 1948 and planted the first vines (Rhine Riesling cuttings), against the advice of the local government, which suggested pears and apples instead. Tasmanian gambler David Walsh purchased Moorilla in the mid-1990s and converted the modernist villa on-site into an antiquities museum. But it was in 2007 that Moorilla turned a corner with the Canadian expert, Conor van der Reest, taking charge of its winemaking; MONA opened in 2011.

The tasting in the posh cellar door includes some fine labels of Moorilla. But there is a hushed whisper in the room about a certain label of Domaine A ([domaine-a.com.au](http://domaine-a.com.au))—a winery that Moorilla bought in 2018. The legendary wine in question starts to come in only by October and sells out by December. It's reputed to be so good that it makes people cry! Called the 'finest oaked Sauvignon Blanc' by James Halliday, this wine called Lady A was first made in 1996 in secret, by Peter Althaus as a gift for his wife, Ruth Althaus, who never put Tasmanian Sauvignon Blanc on par with the French ones. The Swiss couple were the ones who started the Domaine A winery and owned the Stoney Vineyard, the oldest in Tasmania's Coal River Valley, until they retired and sold it all to Moorilla. Lady A eludes me this time, but the story tugs at the same strings that Taras and Amber Ochota's wine-soaked fairytale did.

While Moorilla pairs its wines with art, my final destination holds a fluffy surprise. Tasmanian Truffles



## Sip Your Way Through South Australia

Base yourself in Adelaide for a taste of McLaren Vale and Adelaide Hills. Fly to Tasmania for some unique flavours.



### Getting There

Multiple airlines, including **Air India** ([airindia.in](http://airindia.in)) and **Singapore Airlines** ([singaporeair.com](http://singaporeair.com)), operate daily flights to Adelaide International Airport. McLaren Vale is around 40 kilometres away, and is best accessed by road. It takes one hour to reach Adelaide Hills from here. **Virgin Australia** ([virginaustralia.com](http://virginaustralia.com)) and **Jetstar Airways** ([jetstar.com](http://jetstar.com)) operate connecting flights to Hobart, in Tasmania, via Melbourne. A 25-minute ferry ride from MONA Ferry Terminal takes you to MONA and Moorilla Estate Winery.

### Stay

Adelaide has many luxury options for your stay. One of them is the **Mayfair Hotel** (45, King William St), based in a Heritage Listed building. It offers 170 rooms and suites, with the chic HENNESSY rooftop bar on level 13 to boot. [mayfairhotel.com.au](http://mayfairhotel.com.au)

In McLaren Vale, there aren't too many luxury accommodations, for most tourists make a day trip from Adelaide. However, if you want to stay overnight and explore the region over multiple days, **The Vineyard McLaren Vale** (165 Whitings Road, Blewitt Springs) is a lovely collection of boutique guesthouses and cadoles set on a vineyard. *From ₹19,227 per night; [thevineyardmv.com.au](http://thevineyardmv.com.au)*

**Mount Lofty House - MGallery** has beautiful rooms and cottages that wear strong wooden accents and offer stunning views of the Piccadilly Valley and the Adelaide Hills wine region. *From ₹16,500 per night; [mtloftyhouse.com.au](http://mtloftyhouse.com.au)*

In Hobart, **MACq 01** is a storytelling hotel that offers 87 rooms and 27 suites, each designed after a Tasmanian character of yore. *From ₹14,600 per night; [macq01.com.au](http://macq01.com.au)*

([tastruffles.com.au](http://tastruffles.com.au)) could be the poster child for bucolic tourism. Located on Mole Creek Road, two and a half hours from Hobart, the farm is owned by Henry and Anna Terry. But it's Sherette, a truffle harvester, who ushers us in and hands us protective footwear. Fortunately, we've reached just before the harvest of winter truffle (black truffle) packs up. But it's not Sherette whose lead we must follow. It's her eight-year-old border collie named Bickey! At her human's command, Bickey sprints along a row of trees at the plantation, stopping only when she gets the sweet whiff of a ripe truffle under her paws—truffles grow on tree roots, five to 10 centimetres beneath the ground. Bickey stiffens, paws at the ground, as if marking the spot, and looks at Sherette with a triumphant look. Then it's Sherette's turn to stop her eager dog from pawing any further, and dig out the truffle with surgical precision so as not to break it. After all, each shaving of this subterranean fungus fetches a hefty price at restaurants around the world—at the farm, 30 grams of truffle costs 105 AUD, or ₹5,110. Truffle, like wine, has many reported health benefits.

The canine harvester has been doing her job gleefully for six years now, and she took just six weeks to learn the trick, Sherette says. Bickey may have gotten her name from a tin of biscuits that her previous owners used to draw her attention, but she's a 'ball dog', not a 'treat dog'.

*From left: Black truffle is claimed to have anti-bacterial properties, and is one of the most expensive foods in the world; since it grows under the ground, on roots of oak trees, dogs are often used to sniff out ripe truffles.*



As a reward for her pinpoint accuracy in detecting each truffle, Bickey gets to fetch her favourite pink ball once. Sherette leans towards picking rescues from pounds instead of buying from breeders, and she prefers ball dogs over treat dogs for the latter "tend to get lazy when they're full." But that hasn't stopped her from trying to train her children's one-year-old beagle, Oddy, who has a weakness for treats. Both the dogs cut a heartwarming figure on their makeshift bed in the trunk of Sherette's car, as we feast on button mushroom soup with truffle shavings, truffle cheese, truffle honey, and truffle butter, with a glass of local rosé. The feast takes place in a ramshackle shed that doubles as a rustic tasting room. Outside, the Tasmanian sky drenches the ground that harbours the next batch of summer truffles, which will be harvested from December onwards. In the distance, Bickey gets a long game of fetch as reward for her day's olfactory labour. She's caked in wet mud and euphoria.

I can't say with conviction whether drinking wine (and eating truffles) makes you healthier. But I do learn this from Australia: growing vines, making wine, and harvesting truffles—the right way—fills your days with love and warmth, much like a fine glass of Pinot Noir. 





F I R S T  
T I M E ' S  
T H E  
C H A R M

You know the travel gods  
are by your side when your  
maiden trip to Europe is to  
its most beautiful region,  
Switzerland.

**By Rashima Nagpal**

Im Mittelalter wurde das Haus als Wohnsturm benutzt. 1537–1539 sind lebensbedrohliche Feindausübung Besitzer, daher ist es **Gassenboden** – auch **Kompartitur** – verhaftet der Zürcher Thomas Pellei das Haus an Gott Leder, Stammvater der Lederer vom Luchs. Dieses Geschlecht bleibt Besitzer bis 1610 bis ca. 1550 Zürcher, dann **Brüderlichkeit** genannt. 1610 Übergang vom Junior Georg Leder, 6. Geschlecht von Berg am Irchel, an Leiter Kaspar Das. Gründer einer Privatschule, 1559 Blindeausseit der Zürcher Halbgesichtsschule, 1560 Blinden- und Taubstummenanstalt – 1568 Armenschule der Halbgesichtsschule, 1568 Stadt, Gemeindezelle, 1577–78 Umbau, 1601 Dörfli- und Gemeindezelle, Wohn- u. Geschäftshaus. 1612 Turm- u. Wehrturm als Baudenkmal

From top: The town of Ascona, as seen from a boat on Lake Maggiore; Zürich's Old Town is filled with quaint corners that take you back to Europe's Renaissance era.

The Gotthard Railway connects the northern region of Switzerland to the canton of Ticino in the south through a 15-kilometre-long tunnel.



DO YOU REMEMBER your first extraordinary trip? Your first wine-tasting? Your first spa? Do you remember the first time you took a bus or train in a foreign land? Do you remember how it felt?

No matter how many journeys we embark on, how many places we see, and how many flights we take, our firsts are irreplaceable. At least that's how it is for me. Thus, this story. The story of my first time in Europe. Of all the 44 countries in the continent, I was destined to land in glorious Switzerland. It was bound to be extraordinary and—as I would eventually discover—indulgent.

## ZÜRICH

IT BEGINS IN GLOOMY ZÜRICH. My first impression of Europe takes shape under a spell of thick grey clouds. In the moment, it is only drizzling. So, we decide to keep going. A pack of five, led by an enthusiastic tour guide—Ity Tiwari—who's laden with umbrellas, step out of the Zürich Main Station to grab some much-needed lunch.

But before we set out, Tiwari indulges us in some trivia. We are at Switzerland's biggest and busiest train station. It comprises three levels—the platform level, the shopping level, and the historical station hall on the ground level. A big bright doll with wings hangs over us on the ground level. It is artist Niki de Saint Phalle's *Nana*, "the big-bosomed guardian angel who has been watching over travellers like ourselves since 1997," Tiwari proclaims. The hall is dotted with more artwork, including *The Philosopher's Egg* by Mario Merz. Zürich Hauptbahnhof is well connected to not just every station within Switzerland, but also the neighbouring countries. "If you catch the wrong train, you might land in Paris," someone jokes. The railway buff in me is thrilled.

A five-minute stroll brings us to an apparel store on the plush Bahnhofstrasse, reputed to be the most expensive shopping street in the world. Before I can protest and inquire about lunch, we are inside, taking the elevator to the top floor. The door opens to reveal an Asian brasserie. This is where I have my first Rivella—a classic Swiss soft drink made from milk whey.

With no signage of any sort, Restaurant Rooftop is one of the secret addresses in Zürich. There are plenty more in the old town, or Altstadt ([stadt-zuerich.ch](http://stadt-zuerich.ch)). Locals call them 'archaeological windows' that offer insight into the town's medieval past. For instance, there's a secret door on Lindenhof Square. Opening it requires you to go to Stadthaus, Schalter 04 (Townhouse, Counter 4), and ask for

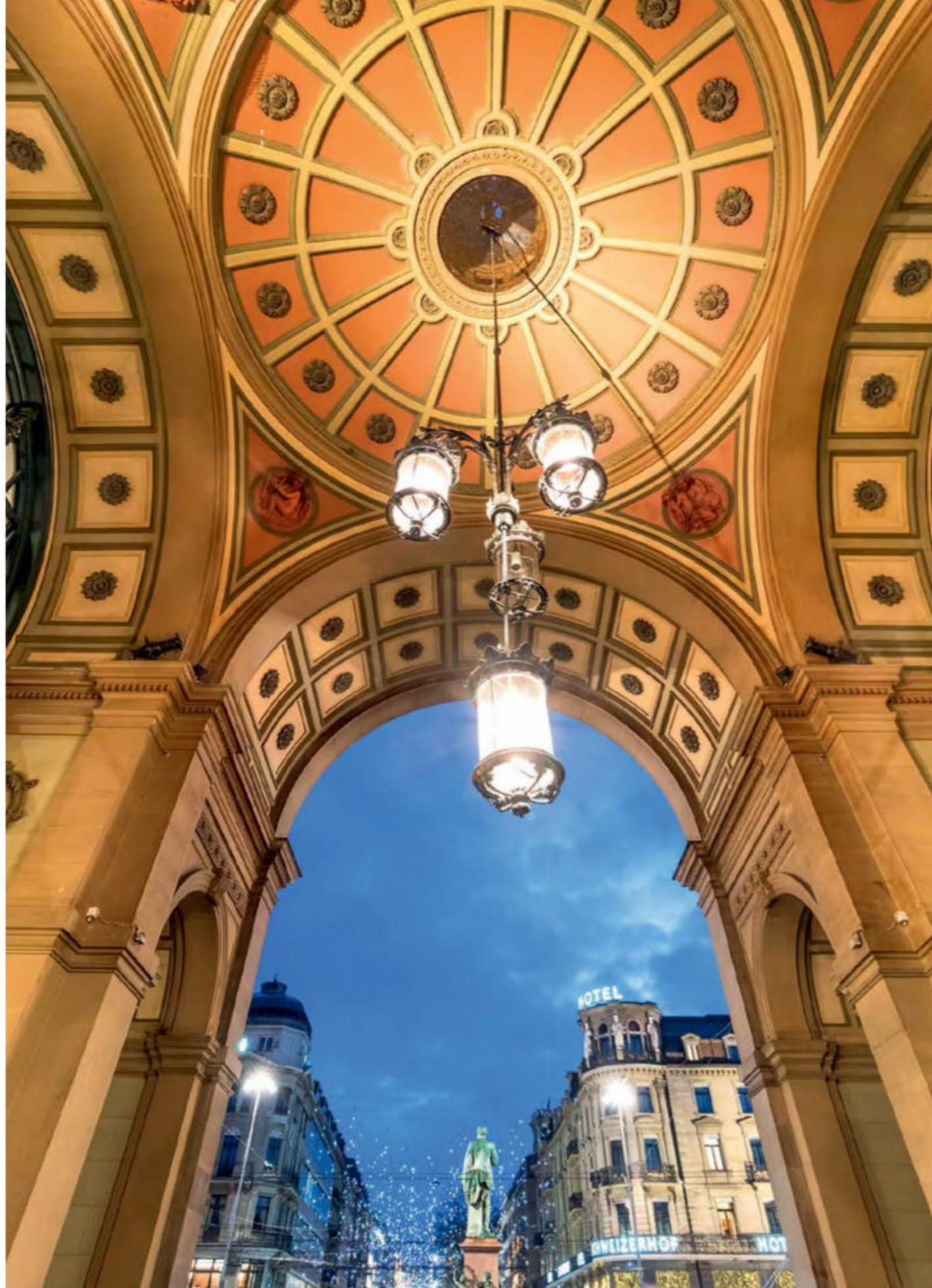




*The Lindenhof Square is a great spot to enjoy views of the Limmat River gushing through Zürich.*

*Artist Niki de Saint Phalle's feminist figure, Nana, at Zürich Main Station is considered a guardian angel watching over travellers.*

*A sculpture of Alfred Escher, the man behind the face of modern Switzerland, stands in front of Zürich Main Station.*



the keys to 'down under'. This adventure ultimately leads you to the ruins of a Roman fort and a palace hiding in plain sight.

Back on the Bahnhofstrasse, the meal is soothing. Trams glide by outside, and the streets have surprisingly few pedestrians out and about. Turns out, most of them are at Confiserie Sprüngli, enjoying a hot cuppa or a dessert—just the kind of thing I would pursue. Born in 1836, this world-famous confectioner has boosted the reputation of Swiss chocolates. No wonder it is bursting at the seams with tourists.

Even in its pale rainy avatar, the city manages to look beautiful. But as the colour-blocked, cobblestoned Old Town begins to appear, my spirits soar. The lively Limmat River separates the old town from the Bahnhofstrasse. And the Grossmünster cathedral, with its Sigmar Polke windows, stands proudly at the intersection.

It's a new day. And it's a damp Sunday, which means that the people of Zürich have all the more reason to snuggle down inside their homes. Except those who are running the Zürich Marathon, of course. My priorities lie elsewhere: I am making my way to the first vegetarian restaurant in the world (as noted in the Guinness World Records).

Haus Hiltl ([hiltl.ch](http://hiltl.ch)), commonly called Hiltl, is an upscale double-storey restaurant whose story goes back to 1898, when a certain German tailor, Ambrosius Hiltl, moved to Zürich. In 1901, rheumatism forced



*Clockwise from top:  
A dessert at Confiserie  
Sprüngli; Zunfthaus  
zur Zimmerleuten is a  
historic restaurant on  
Limmatquai; Atlantis  
by Giardino, Zürich  
offers picture-perfect  
views from its rooms.*

him to give up his profession. Desperate to find a solution to his predicament, Hiltl discovered the doctrine proposed by famed Swiss doctor Maximilian Bircher-Benner—the pioneering nutritionist who invented muesli— that had a vegetarian diet at the heart of it. Sold on the idea, Hiltl decided to stop eating meat. In 1903, when Switzerland's only vegetarian restaurant, Vegetarierheim, was facing a hard time, Hiltl decided to take over as the managing director, until he finally bought it three years later. Today, Hiltl is a chain of eight restaurants run by the family.

Laid out in front of me—a food-loving vegetarian—is a buffet of over 100 dishes. Who needs the sun anymore?

## TICINO

AFTER 48 HOURS of stone-cold weather and no sun, we are counting on the 'sunniest part of Switzerland' to live up to its reputation.

In Switzerland, a switch in cantons can feel like a change of countries. Ticino, a canton in the south, has its feet touching Italy.

Naturally, it enjoys the best of both the worlds, including Italy's balmy weather. The two countries also share lakes—Lake Maggiore and Lake Lugano. When compared to the rest of Switzerland, everything is different—the language, the food, the people, and the way of life.

The Gotthard Railway transports us to the Mediterranean heart of Switzerland in under three hours. Within one hour of our arrival, we have parked ourselves by the sunny lake promenade of Lake Maggiore in Ascona. This is where I bask in the popular Mediterranean vibe of an al fresco European restaurant for the first time. Handmade pasta in (almost) Italy? Check!

Over the course of the next three days, the aim is to visit three towns—Lugano, Locarno, and Bellinzona—and make the most of this potpourri. A farm and a vineyard, plenty of walkways, a gelataria, lakes, islands and boat rides, a variety of food, free-flowing aperol spritz, and a few castles—there's a lot that we end up experiencing. But I feel like I understand more of Ticino from Anna Bezzola, our guide for this leg of the trip, than I do from

*Plane trees dot the lake promenade of Ascona.*



IMAGEBROKER/ALAMY



*In Ticino, the soft drink gazzosa is known as the 'champagne of the poor'.*

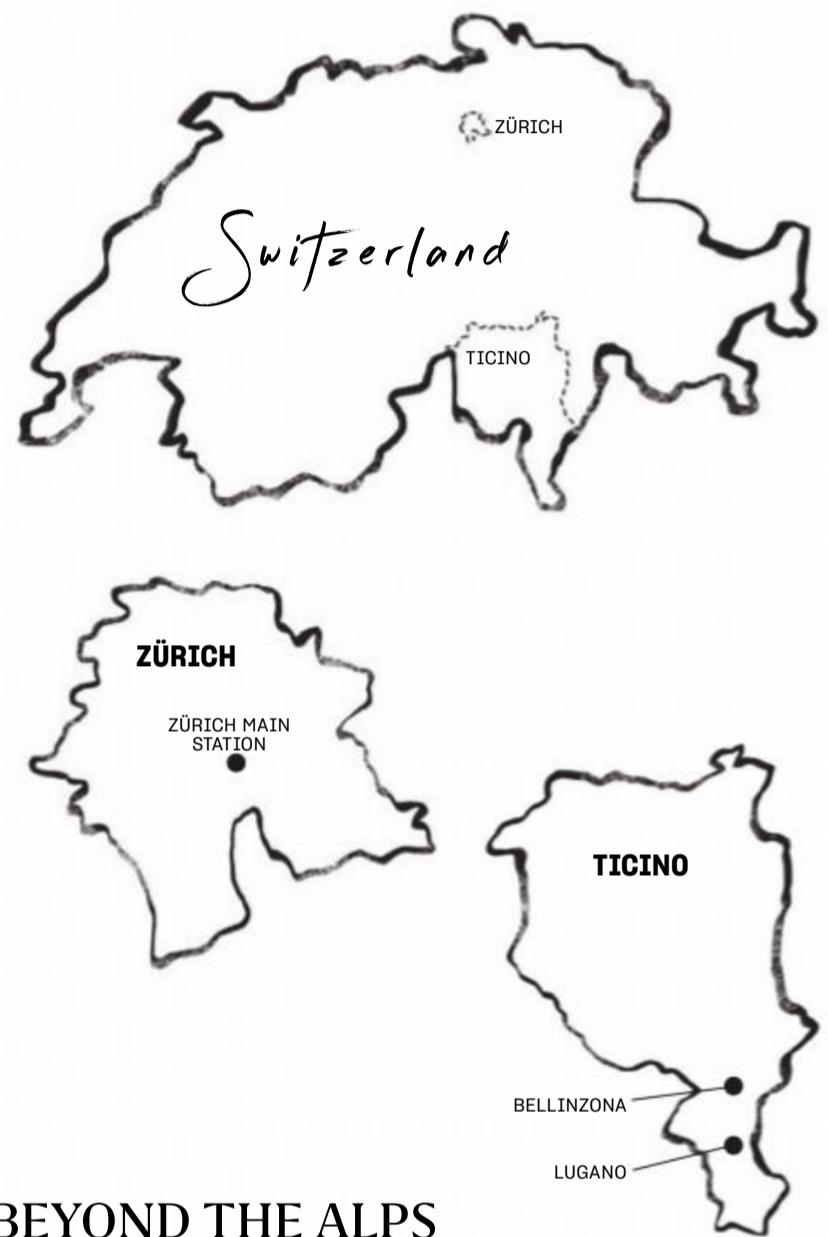
sightseeing. Apart from working closely with Ticino Turismo ([ticino.ch](http://ticino.ch)), she is a trip organiser for Ticino and Italy. That explains the name of her organisation, Alps and Beyond ([alpsandbeyond.com](http://alpsandbeyond.com)).

We meet her in Locarno. This is when things take a rich cultural turn.

## LOCARNO

“You can tell the people of Bellinzona from the people of Locarno from the people of Lugano simply by the dialect of Italian they speak,” Bezzola says. Once upon a time, there were no roads to connect the regions, and this, she believes, is why people didn’t communicate with one another as much. “But now, Ticino is becoming a melting pot.”

Located on the northern shore of Lake Maggiore, Locarno is the smallest of the three towns. It is all about picturesque streets, homegrown boutiques, and the largest city square in Switzerland—Piazza Grande, which hosts some spectacular annual events. “All roads in Locarno lead to Piazza Grande,” Bezzola quips. Around Christmas (from November 21 to January 6 this season), the Piazza transforms into a winter wonderland—with an ice rink surrounded by red carpets, a partly covered and heated terrace, a stage for live acts, four huge transparent igloo bars, and a row of small chalets that serve gastronomic delights. During summer, it famously holds two major cultural events. The music festival, Moon & Stars (July 9, 2020 – July 19, 2020), is followed by the Locarno International Film Festival (August 5, 2020 - August 15, 2020); these bring thousands of visitors from



## BEYOND THE ALPS

There's more to Switzerland than the Alps. For a luxe itinerary that is also culturally immersive, begin your journey in elegant Zürich and sum it up Italy-style in the canton of Ticino.

### GETTING THERE

**SWISS** ([swiss.com](http://swiss.com)) serves regular direct flights to Zürich from Delhi and Mumbai.

### STAY

**Atlantis by Giardino, Zürich** is a plush modern hotel that sits on the outskirts of the city—an ideal option to experience the Swiss countryside and have easy access to the city life at the same time. From ₹23,700; [giardinohotels.ch/Zurich](http://giardinohotels.ch/Zurich)

The boutique property of **Giardino Ascona**, at a plush countryside location, feels

like a home on the border of Switzerland and Italy. From ₹36,000; [giardinohotels.ch/en/ascona](http://giardinohotels.ch/en/ascona)

### TIP

Depending on the duration of your stay, buy a three-, four-, eight-, or 15-day **Swiss Travel Pass** in advance. Apart from unlimited travel by public transport in more than 90 cities and towns, it covers mountain excursions to Rigi, Schilthorn, Stoos, and Stanserhorn, as well as gives free admission to more than 500 museums across Switzerland. [MySwitzerland.com](http://MySwitzerland.com)

around the world. Hand prints of musicians who have played in Locarno, including those of Elton John, Billy Idol, and Sting, are set in stone and paved on the pathways.

The Lugano that we see is developed and modern. It has top-notch shopping brands, none of which are found in Locarno or Bellinzona. "Locarno has begun to have some really nice ones, but Bellinzona? Forget it!" Anna scoffs. "Lugano also has a variety of five-star hotels and is a famous Swiss destination among Asians and Arabs who love to indulge." If you want to escape the city, drive to one of the remote valleys behind Locarno.

However, we only pass by the town and do not stop to ponder or luxuriate. So we grab an authentic gelato at La Gelateria di Lugano ([gelaterialugano.ch](http://gelaterialugano.ch)) and lounge in the park overlooking Lake Lugano, before we catch another train.

## BELLINZONA

A journey of 25 minutes and we are ready to alight in the capital of Ticino, Bellinzona.

The simple reason to put this town on your itinerary is that it is a UNESCO World

*Bellinzona is known for its UNESCO-recognised castles.*

*The Red Arrow is a tourist train that offers joyful rides in Lugano.*



Heritage Site rich in history. "Architecturally, this is the most authentic of the towns we have in Ticino," states Bezzola. It doesn't have a lake, and yet, it is the capital of Ticino. It is home to three castles—Castlegiandre, Montebello, and Sasso Corbaro—which were recognised by UNESCO in 2000. They say that this is the only visible example of military defence architecture of this proportion, from the medieval times, in the Alps. The other castles in the region pale in comparison. The original purpose of the castles may not hold any relevance today, but among the people of Bellinzona, they are integral parts of their Italian heritage. Bezzola, who has been living in Bellinzona since 2002, offers a remarkable example.

During Rabadan, the second largest carnival in Switzerland, a huge mass is held at Castlegiandre. And it is held facing Italy. But if you ask someone if they are Swiss or Italian, they'll emphasise that they are indeed Swiss. When the 15-kilometre-long Gotthard Tunnel that facilitated a direct connection with northern Switzerland was built, the people of Bellinzona were afraid that they'd begin to speak German. So, in the late 1800s, they worked hard to preserve the region's tradition of speaking Italian. It's not difficult to see they succeeded. Today, "what happens in Bellinzona, stays in Bellinzona."

There's no comparing Zürich to Ticino, but both the cities leave starkly different impressions on a first-time visitor. If I must pick a shot from my gallery of pictures that best describes Zürich, it'd be that of an elegant young lady—dressed smartly in a black trench coat, a pair of block heels, a fedora, and a string of pearls—walking down an alley. From Lugano, I'd show you a photograph of a man playing football with his three children in one of the public courtyards. Invisible borders sometimes lead to rather visible differences. 





## Hospitality Partner



Björn Rettig, CEO, Burda Media India.



Anil Chadha, Vice President-Operations, ITC Hotels and WelcomHotel.

On November 15, 2019, *Travel+Leisure India & South Asia* lit up the national capital with the eighth edition of its annual flagship event, India's Best Awards, at ITC Maurya, New Delhi. Hosted by actor and UN Environment National Goodwill Ambassador, Dia Mirza, the evening centred on the theme of Conscious Travel. The crème de la crème of the travel and hospitality industries, including leading hoteliers, tourism board representatives, and restaurateurs from all over the world, graced the event. The glamorous night was the culmination of a three-month-long online voting process that decided the winners of 60 award categories, which covered the entire gamut of luxury services and products in travel and hospitality. Apart from the annual categories, this edition introduced some unique award segments that recognised the changemakers and trendsetters in the world of tourism. While Dr Latika Nath was awarded in the category of Photography For A Cause, Afroz Shah won the title of Hero For Earth, and Nicobar was felicitated as the Best Eco-friendly Fashion Brand.



Aindrila Mitra, Editor-in-chief, *Travel+Leisure India & South Asia*.



Host for the evening, actor and UN Environment National Goodwill Ambassador, Dia Mirza.



The eighth edition of India's Best Awards had the theme of Conscious Travel.

## Gifting Partners



## Pouring Partner



## BEST LUXURY HOTEL CHAIN

ITC HOTELS



(L-R) Ajeet Bajaj, A-List member and Founder, Snow Leopard Adventures; Anil Chadha; Sushmita Gupta, Business Head, Burda Media India.

## BEST HERITAGE DESTINATION

ODISHA



Vishal Kr Dev, Commissioner cum Secretary for Tourism & Sports and Tushar Kanti Behera, Minister for Sports & Youth Services, Odisha, receive the Best Heritage Destination award.



(L-R) Food connoisseur Rashmi Uday Singh; Sheema Vohra, Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing LLP, receives the Best MICE Destination award for California; fashion designer Raghavendra Rathore.



(L-R) Author Siddharth Dhanvant Shangvi presents the Best Food Destination Award for Tokyo to Yamamoto San, Executive Director, Delhi office, JNTO.

Vikramaditya Singh, Vice President and General Manager and Saurabh Khurana, EAM - Sales and Marketing, The Lodhi, New Delhi, receive the award for Best Bleisure Hotel (Domestic).



Ramniwas Gawriya, Hon'ble MLA-Parbatsar Constituency and Dr Bhanwar Lal, Director-Rajasthan Tourism, receive the award for Best Wedding Destination (Domestic).



(L-R) A-List member and fashion designer Shivan Bhatiya; Ritu Sharma, Deputy Director & Head of Marketing, Switzerland Tourism receives the award for Best Country; A-List member and founder of Rare India, Shoba Mohan.



Silki Sehgal, Vice President-Corporate Communications, The Oberoi Hotels and Resorts.



(L-R) Col. Bhawani Singh (Retd.); Shivina Kumari, Executive Director, Princess Diya Kumari Foundation; Björn Rettig.



Manish Joshi, Senior Tourism Officer, Chattisgarh, receives the award for Best Cultural Destination.



(L-R) Pusha Kothi, Head-Communications, Atout France-France Tourism, receives the Best Luxury Destination award for Paris; Aindrila Mitra.



Amruta Bangera, Administration Manager, Tel Aviv, receives the award for Best City (International).



Rohit Gupta, Addl Managing Director, Punjab Tourism Development Corporation, and Alka Kapoor, Manager Projects, Punjab Heritage & Tourism Promotion Board, receive the award for Best Cultural Destination (Domestic).



Hemant Mediratta, Senior Vice President, Sales, The Oberoi Group, receives the Editor's Choice award for Best Business Hotel (International)—The Oberoi, Dubai.



Udipti Pansikar, Hotel Manager, The Oberoi, New Delhi; Ibrahim Magdum, Director of Rooms, The Oberoi, New Delhi; Mohit Prakash, Director of Sales, The Oberoi, New Delhi, receive the Editor's Choice award for Hotel of the Year.



Sunil Puri, Joint Managing Director, Sartha Global Marketing, receives the Best MICE Destination award for Hong Kong.



Priyanka Nijhawan of Nijhawan Group, and officials from Dubai Tourism—Munira Albastaki and Abdullah Yousuf—receive the award for Best Wedding Destination (International).



Meena Bhatia, Vice President & General Manager, Le Méridien New Delhi, receives the award for Best Business Hotel (Domestic); TV host and presenter, Archana Vijaya.



Srijan Vadhera, General Manager and Sidharth Kaul, Commercial Business Director, Conrad Bengaluru, receive the award for Best Bleisure Hotel (Domestic).



Digital influencers Dolly Singh, Manjari Singh, Komal Pandey, and Shivesh Bhatia with Aindrila Mitra.



Temurbek Anvarbekov, from the The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, receives the award for Best Heritage Destination (International).



The award for Best Honeymoon Destination for Oman received by Tina Singh, DGM-North, Blue Square Consultants.



Meena Rewari, Director Sales & Marketing, Park Hyatt Chennai, receives the Editor's Choice award for Best Business Hotel (Domestic).



(L-R) Parinita Samanta, Director of Marketing Communications, Hyatt Regency Delhi; Sushmita Gupta; Neha Juneja, Public Relations Executive, Hyatt Regency Delhi.



Kanika Arora, Marketing Development Manager, New Zealand, receives the award for Best Green Destination.



Fredrik Blomqvist, General Manager, and Gargi Guha, Director, Public Relations, Four Seasons Bengaluru, receive the Editor's Choice award for Best New Business Hotel.



Atul Kapur, Co-owner, Alila Fort Bishangarh, receives the Editor's Choice award for Best Heritage Hotel.



Gala Ribacova, wife of Eduardo Sánchez Moreno, Head of Mission, Spain, receives the award for Best Family Destination (International).



(L-R) Vivek Pareek, Editorial Director, Burda Media India; Arif Patel, RVP Sales & Marketing, Hyatt India, receives the Best Hotel Loyalty Programme award for World of Hyatt.



Raymond Lim, Area Director-Singapore Tourism Board (India & South Asia), receives the Best Country award for Singapore.



Salvatore Ianniello, Director of ENIT Italian State Tourist Board, receives the award for Best Luxury Destination-Lake Como.



(L-R) His Excellency Farhod Arziev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan; Ranjita Shaw, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, receives the award for Best New Hotel (Domestic) won by The Roseate Ganges; Archana Vijaya.



Deepali Bhatia from Marriott International receives the award for Best New Hotel (International) won by The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort.

## BEST ADVENTURE DESTINATION— FINLAND



Jukka Holappa, Commercial Counsellor India, Business Finland, receives the award for Best Adventure Destination—Finland.

## ITC ROYAL BENGAL



Anil Chadha receives the Best New Hotel (Domestic) award for ITC Royal Bengal.



Aromica Bhattacharya, Specialist in Tourism, Commercial Office of Peru in India, receives the award for Best Adventure Destination.



Aindrila Mitra, Dia Mirza, Björn Rettig.



Ashwin Moodliar, Vice President Marketing, ITC Hotels receives the award for Best Hotel Loyalty Programme—Club ITC.



Cavaliere Giovanni Viterale, General Manager, Fullerton Hotel Singapore, receives the award for Best Business Hotel (International).



Ruchika Mehta, Corporate Director, Communications and Public Relations, The Park Hotels receives the Best Business Hotel (Domestic) award for The Park Kolkata.



Indira Banerjee, Director Sales & Strategic Planning and Vijay Wanchoo, Sr Executive Vice President and General Manager, The Imperial, New Delhi, receive the award for Best Heritage Hotel (Domestic).



South Africa receives the award for Best Family Destination (International).



Ruma Gupta, Press Relations Manager, Monaco Government Tourist Bureau, receives the award for Best Wedding Destination (International).



Vivek Anand, Country Manager, MTPA India receives the Best Honeymoon Destination (International) award for Mauritius.



Silki Sehgal receives the Best Luxury Resort award for The Oberoi Beach Resort, Al Zorah.



Adriana Villanueva, Head of Cooperation and Economic Promotion, Embassy of Mexico, receives the award for Best Heritage Destination (International).



(L-R) Aindrila Mitra; K M Chengappa, General Manager, The Leela Palace Chennai, receives the award for Best Eco-Friendly Luxury Hotel; author and historian Rana Safvi.



Adong Moyong, RTO, receives the Best Emerging Green Destination award for Arunachal Pradesh.



The stunning host for the evening, Dia Mirza.



Anita Sachan, Special Officer, Assam Tourism, receives the award for Best Family Destination (Domestic).



Cavaliere Giovanni Viterale, General Manager, receives the Editor's Choice award for Best Bleisure Hotel—The Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore.



Alila Diwa Goa receives the award for Best Family Hotel.



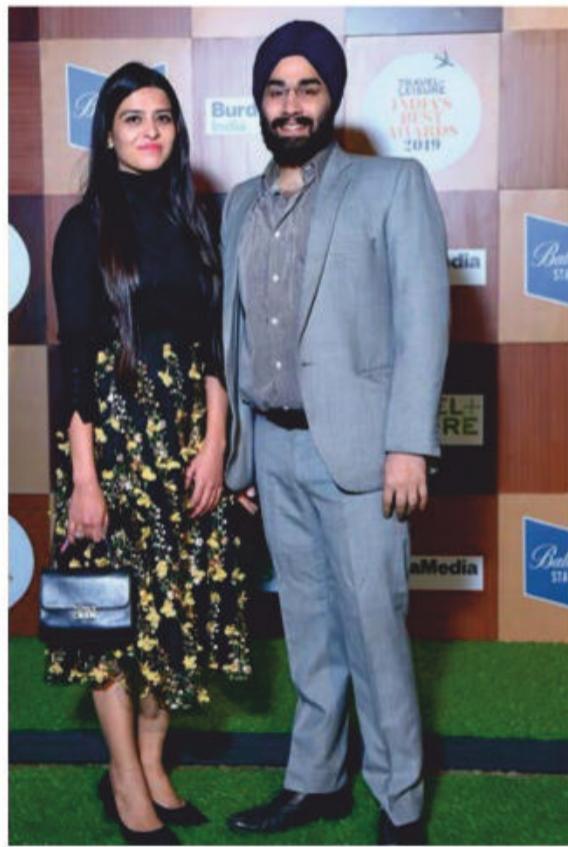
TV Personality Archana Vijaya.



The team of The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts after their big win at India's Best Awards 2019.



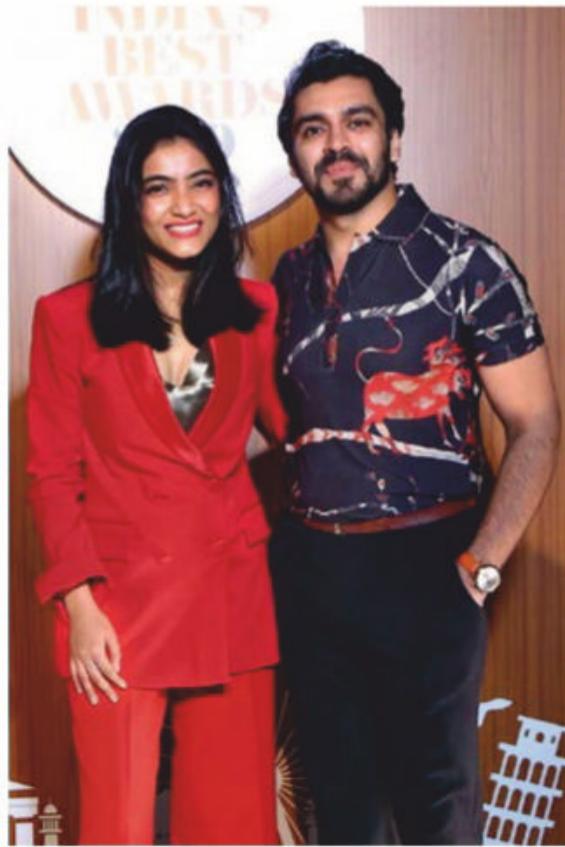
Rajesh Namby, General Manager, The Leela Palace, Udaipur, receives the award for Best Heritage Hotel (Domestic).



Jaspreet Singh, Founder, Seer Secrets, with Shagun.



Ankush Nijhawan, MD, Nijhawan Group, receives the award for Çırağan Palace Kempinski, which won Best Heritage Hotel (International).



Apoorva Negi and Shivan Bhatiya.



Isara Sat, Director, Thailand Tourism, receives the award for Best Green Destination.



Soman S Pathy, Liaison and Nodal Officer, Gujarat Tourism, receives the Best State award for Gujarat.



(L-R) Sumeet Keswani, Deputy Editor, *T+L India & South Asia*; Kate McMahon receives the award for OUTLETCITY METZINGEN, the Best One-Stop Shopping Destination; food critic Rupali Dean.



Dr Ratheesh Kumar-Spa Director, Shamana Spa at Grand Hyatt Goa, receives the award for Best Destination Spa (Domestic).



Pawan Kamra and Dhruv Salaria from Kairali - The Ayurvedic Healing Village receive the award for Best Destination Spa (Domestic).



Vijai Singh, General Manager, InterContinental Fujairah, receives the award for Best Destination Spa (International).



Manoj, Deputy Director, Kerala Tourism, receives the award for Best Honeymoon Destination (Domestic).



A kathak performance from Jaipur gharana, by artists from Gurmeet Malhotra's Music N Dance Academy.



Art connoisseur Shalini Passi with husband Sanjay Passi.



The team of Nicobar-Best Eco-Friendly Fashion Brand takes a candid picture with the host and the presenters.



(L-R) Shivesh Bhatia receives the Best Food Blogger award from A-List member and restaurateur Zorawar Kalra.



Dr Latika Nath wins the award for Photography for a Cause.



Sanjiv Gadkar, Director, Goa Tourism, receives the Best Wedding Destination.



Sonale Zagade, Hotel Manager, Grand Hyatt Mumbai, receives the award for Best Hotel for Women Travellers.



Devendra Rai, Resident Manager, Madhya Pradesh Tourism, receives the Best Heritage Destination award.



Jaideep Anand, VP, Pre-opening Operations, The Leela Palaces, Hotels & Resorts; Varun Chhibber, GM, The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotels & Residences; Ritika Paffett, Head PR & Marketing, The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotels & Residences, receive the award for Best Hotel for Women Travellers.



Rohit Dar and Ranjan Malakar, Regional Directors of Operations-India, Hilton Hotels and Resorts, receive the award for the Best Hotel Group.



Kate Sim, Head-Spa Operations, The Oberoi Group, receives the award for Best Destination Spa For International Travellers won by The Oberoi Sukhvilas Spa Resort.



Raymond Lim, Area Director-India & South Asia, Singapore Tourism Board, receives the Best Amusement Park award for Universal Studios Singapore.



Meena Rewari, Director, Sales & Marketing, Park Hyatt Chennai, receives the award for the Best Hotel Group won by Hyatt Hotels.



Bhavya Kukreja, GM, Plaza Premium Lounge-India, receives the award for Best Airport Lounge.



Grand Hyatt Kochi Bolgatty receives the Editor's Choice award for Best Family Hotel (Domestic).



Social media influencers, Dolly Singh and Komal Pandey.



YEOH Phee Teik, Senior Vice President, Customer Experience, Singapore Airlines, receives the award for Best Airline (International).



Binita Rai, PRO, Sikkim Tourism, receives the award for Best Emerging Green Destination (Domestic).



Saloni Mehta, PR Pundit, receives the Best Wedding Venue award for InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.



Medhavi Pande receives the Best Sustainable Luxury Resort award for Kumarakom Lake Resort.



Pavithra Chari and Anindo Bose, from the band Shadow & Light, add a musical note to the evening.



Nikhil Vahi, Business Head-Hospitality & Senior Vice President-Operations & Development for DS Group, and Sanjay Kansal, General Manager, Namah, receive the award for Best Sustainable Luxury Resort.



Augustus Simon, Global Account Director, Jumeirah Group, receives the Best Luxury Resort award for Jumeirah Beach Hotel.



Binod Kumar Sinha, Director & Head, Bureau of Indian Standards, National Institute of Training for Standardisation.



Raymond Lim, Area Director-India, Singapore Tourism Board, receives the award for Best Integrated Resort won by Resorts World Sentosa Singapore.



Francis Jerome of Changi Airport receives the award for Best International Airport.



Siddharth Yadav, Vice President-Operations, and Raghvendra Singh Shekhawat, Joint MD, Narendra Bhawan, Bikaner, receive the award for Best Boutique Hotel.



Nimesh Shukla, Vistara's Station Manager at Indira Gandhi International Airport, receives the award for Best Airport Lounge.



Team Travel+Leisure India & South Asia after a successful evening.



## YOUR BEST SHOT

**BAVARIA'S COUNTRYSIDE IS THE EMBODIMENT** of the storybooks that we all grew up reading. The mighty snow-capped Alps shrouded in wispy clouds and set against a bright blue sky, meadows full of flowers, tranquillity punctuated by the lazy ringing of cowbells, medieval towns with cobblestoned streets, Tudor-style houses fortified within walls. We went hiking through the Bavarian Alps in May this year. It had been raining for several days, and we were disappointed not to get good views of the castles in the area. One early morning, the rain cleared up just as the sun was rising, and we got one of the most stunning views of Schloss Hohenschwangau. Dwarfed by the mighty Alps, the sun-yellow castle is surrounded by thick pine forest, with Lake Alpsee shimmering in the background.

**—KUNAL GUPTA ON HIS PHOTOGRAPH, SHOT ON A SONY A7 III CAMERA WITH A SONY FE 24-105MM F/4 G OSS LENS, MAY 2019.**

Kunal Gupta was an entrant in our ongoing 'Your Best Shot' contest. Submit your best shots at [tplusl@burda.in](mailto:tplusl@burda.in), or hashtag [#telltnindia](#) and tag [@travelandleisureindia](#) on Instagram, to stand a chance to get featured on this page.

# THE PRIDE WE TAKE IN BRINGING YOU AN AWARD-WINNING FLIGHT EXPERIENCE

That's what makes us the world's most awarded airline



## Travel + Leisure India's Best Awards 2019

We believe in making every journey delightful for you. So thank you for recognising us as the Best International Airline for the third year running.



A great way to fly



To go with the flow, along slow-moving  
canals, to find deep journeys  
in little country boats, to catch the  
drift of conversations under quaint  
log bridges, and discover  
close-knit lives on distant islands.

# HUMAN *by* NATURE

STARK.Tvm.9028

  
kerala  
God's Own Country  
[keralatourism.org](http://keralatourism.org)

# JAIPUR

*on* Airbnb



HOMES

COSY  
COLOURFUL  
LUXURIOUS

ROYAL  
RECOMMENDATIONS

GEMS OF THE  
PINK CITY

EXPERIENCES

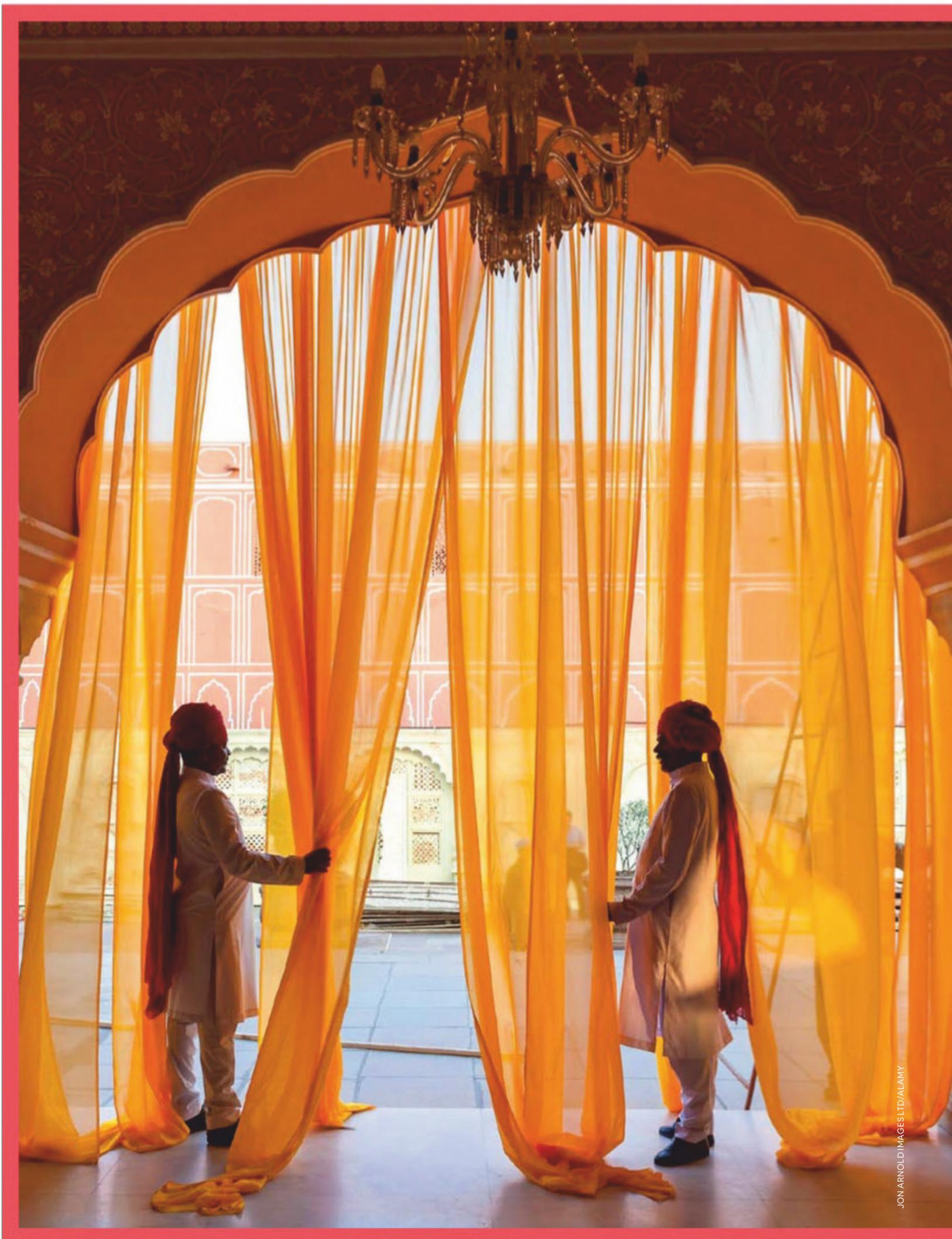
INDULGE IN  
ART AND  
ADVENTURE

CITY PALACE JAIPUR

Call It  
Home



airbnb



JON ARNOLD IMAGES LTD/ALAMY

# CONTENTS

## 04 *Welcome Note*

Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh invites you to spend a few days in his palatial home while contributing to a noble cause.



P. 05

## 05 *Cover Story*

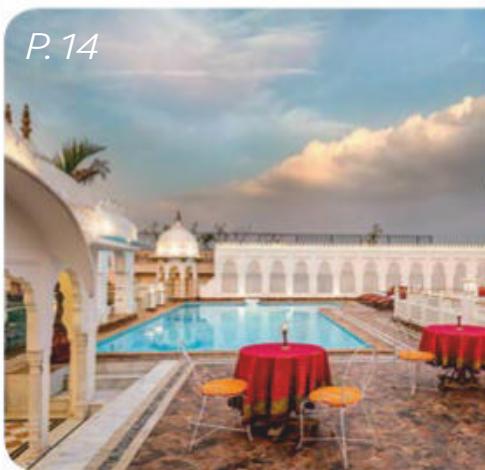
### **A Regal Alliance**

A collaboration between Airbnb and the royal family gives you the rare chance to live like a royal in City Palace Jaipur.

## 10 *Homes*

### **10 Simply Serene**

The Designer's Studio is warm and understated.



P. 14

### **11 Chic Luxuries**

Pink City Penthouse is the quintessential modern Indian home.

### **12 Bold & Beautiful**

The Artist's Mansion embodies Jaipur's spirit with ample local motifs.

### **13 An Artsy Retreat**

A bohemian vibe awaits you at The Artist's Studio.

### **14 Old Is Gold**

Experience Rajasthani royalty at the Royal Suite.

## 15 *Experiences*

### **15 Craft Some Stories**

Spend a day learning crafts from the women of PDKF.

### **16 Say Hello To History**

Discover the hidden gems of Jaipur.

### **17 Weave Your Magic**

Learn the indigenous art of carpet weaving.

### **18 Chase The Sun**

Climb atop Amer Fort and catch the sunrise.

### **19 Paint It Blue**

Get a hands-on experience of blue pottery.



P. 20

## 20 *Interview*

### **Allies With A Cause**

The founder of PDKF, Princess Diya Kumari, talks about the foundation's partnership with Airbnb.

## 22 *Must Visit*

### **Royal Recommendations**

Earmark these Jaipur recommendations of Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh.

### **ON THE COVER**

Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh in front of Chandra Mahal.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Tarun Khiwal

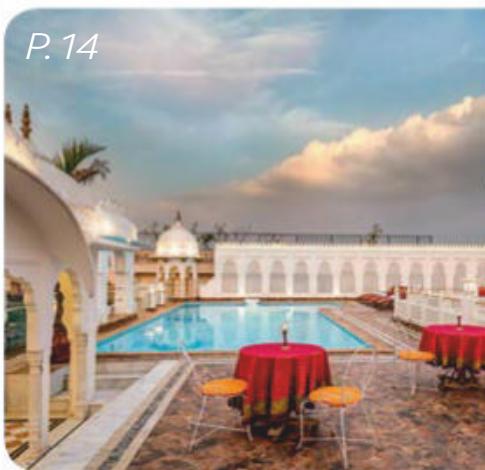
PRODUCER  
Aindrila Mitra

LOCATION  
City Palace Jaipur

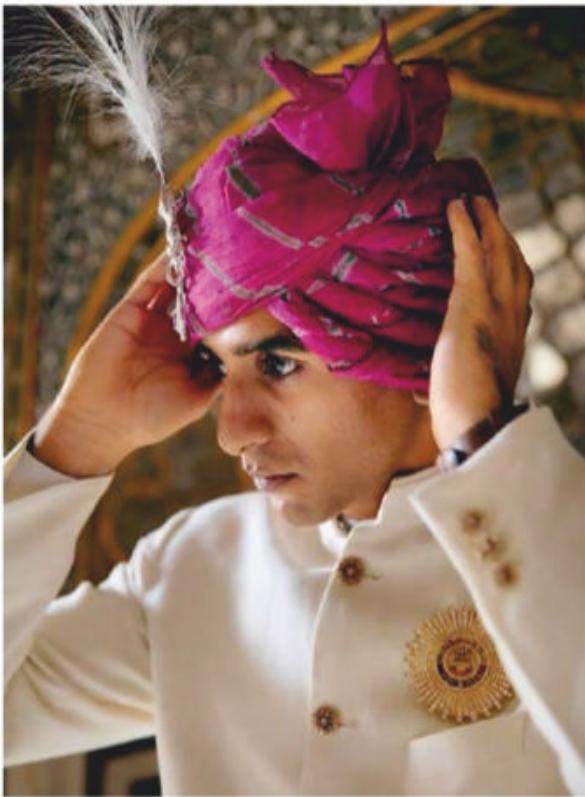


P. 15

P. 05



P. 20

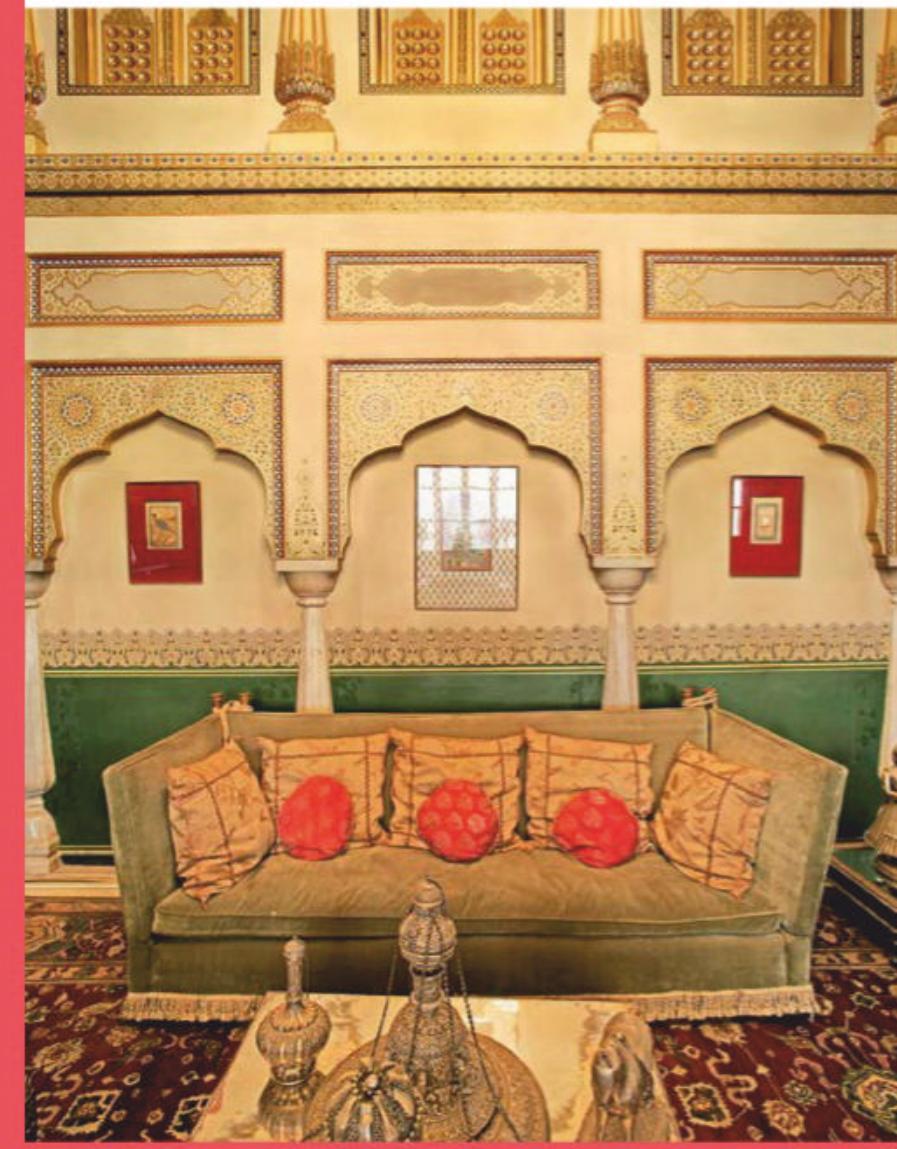
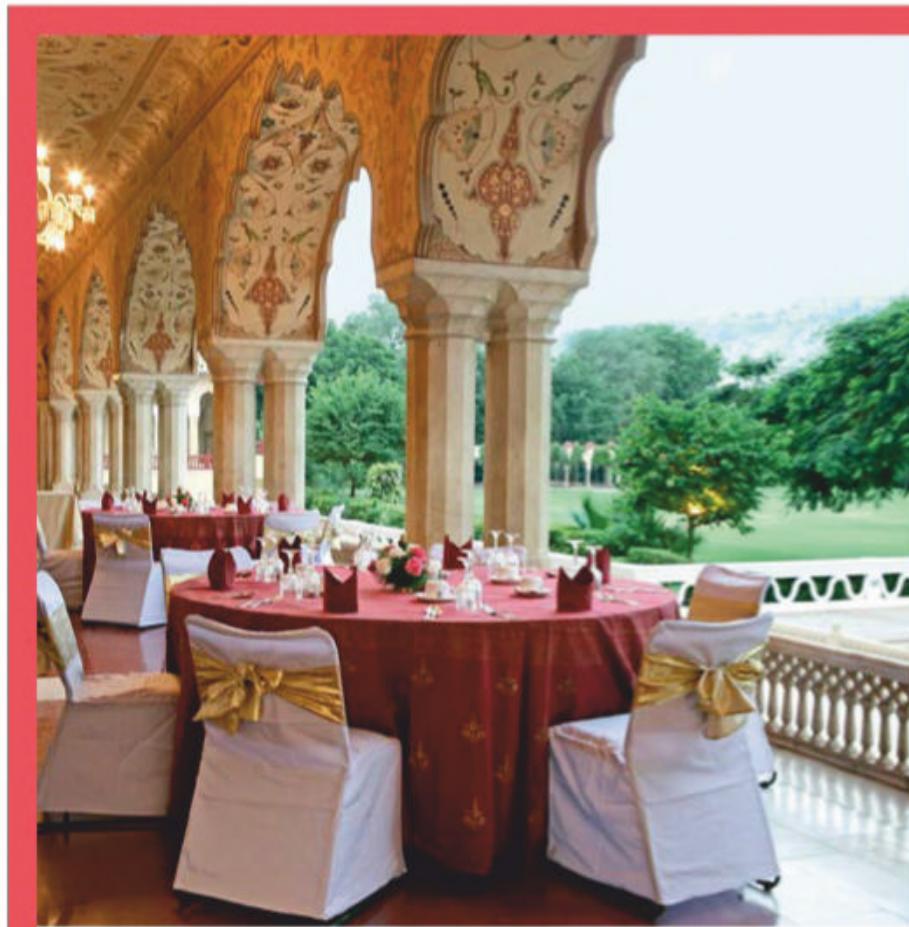


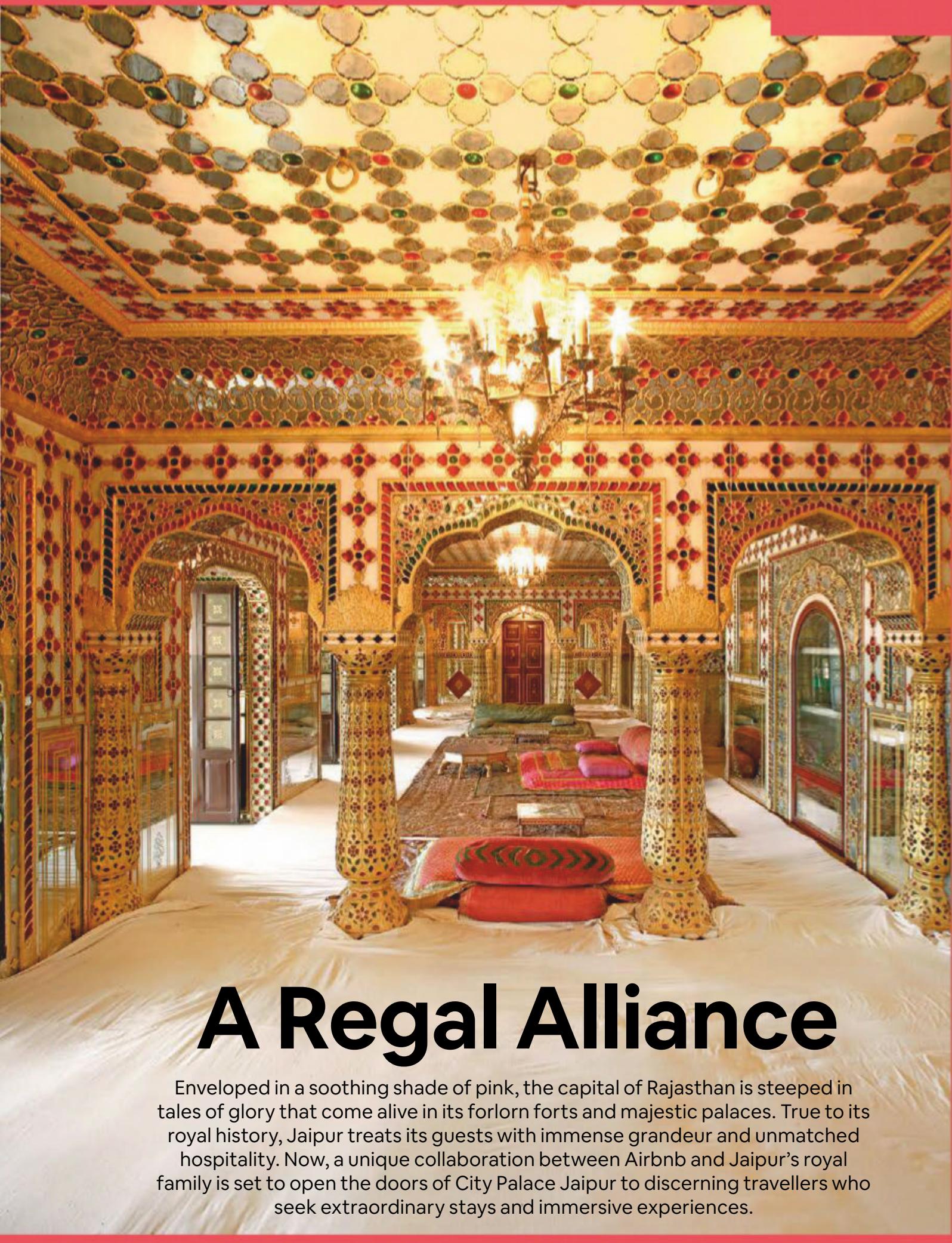
## Welcome Note

*K*hama ghani! I welcome you to our home: the City Palace Jaipur. This is the first time we're offering travellers the experience of living in the palace, in an exclusive collaboration with Airbnb, for a cause that is close to my heart. The suite available on the platform is located in our residential quarters of the City Palace. It's a beautiful space called Gudliya, which employs the different patterns and motifs found around the palace. It has a spacious bedroom and seating area with an en-suite luxurious bathroom, and a lovely courtyard. We discovered a hidden passage that led to an enclosed water storage area, which has now been converted into a beautiful private indoor swimming pool. Apart from the opulent stay, our staff will take care of the guest's every need and provide exclusive experiences in the Pink City.

I also see this unique partnership as a great platform to support the underprivileged women with whom we work closely—by virtue of the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation. An exclusive Airbnb Experience will introduce you to these skilled women and offer a lesson in traditional handicrafts. Jaipur is a city of artisans. Their talent is priceless, and it needs to be preserved. With Airbnb's platform, we hope that more people can familiarise themselves with the city's rich repository of art and culture, and in turn, support the artisans. The aim is to put Jaipur's cultural heritage on the world map.

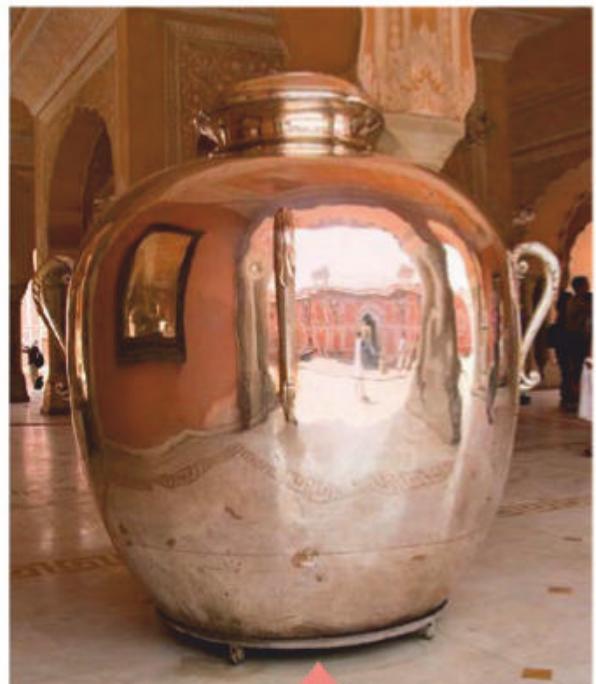
—Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh





# A Regal Alliance

Enveloped in a soothing shade of pink, the capital of Rajasthan is steeped in tales of glory that come alive in its forlorn forts and majestic palaces. True to its royal history, Jaipur treats its guests with immense grandeur and unmatched hospitality. Now, a unique collaboration between Airbnb and Jaipur's royal family is set to open the doors of City Palace Jaipur to discerning travellers who seek extraordinary stays and immersive experiences.



Clockwise: A cannon hints at a bygone era in City Palace Jaipur; decorative wall paintings inside make for alluring picture backdrops; the royal family has preserved many souvenirs of the past.

Jaipur is unique, as is its most celebrated asset, the City Palace. An intricate 18<sup>th</sup>-century façade welcomes you to the official residence of Jaipur's royal family, and is followed by the overwhelming grandeur of a complex of courtyards, pavilions, lush gardens, and fascinating museums, all overlooked by the mighty Kachhwaha flag flapping in the mighty winds that sweep the desert lands of Rajasthan. The interiors of the palace stay bathed in their old-world opulence; the moment you step out, Jaipur unfurls like a sea of sandstone buildings, mid-rise towers, quirky hangouts, and busy market lanes.

When you regard this kaleidoscope of eras radiating out in the Pink City from its epicentre, the City Palace, it feels but natural to want to call it home for the duration of your stay. Now, you can, thanks to a unique collaboration between the hospitality platform and the royal family.

Since its inception, Airbnb has offered authentic and unique stays around the world, hosted by locals who know the lay of the land better than any guidebook. The new listing at City Palace Jaipur takes this offering up several notches. Not only does it promise incoming tourists a taste of the royal life, but also carries the potential of putting Jaipur on the world map.

**The Airbnb listing in City Palace Jaipur promises a slice of royalty to tourists and puts the cultural heritage of the city on the world map.**

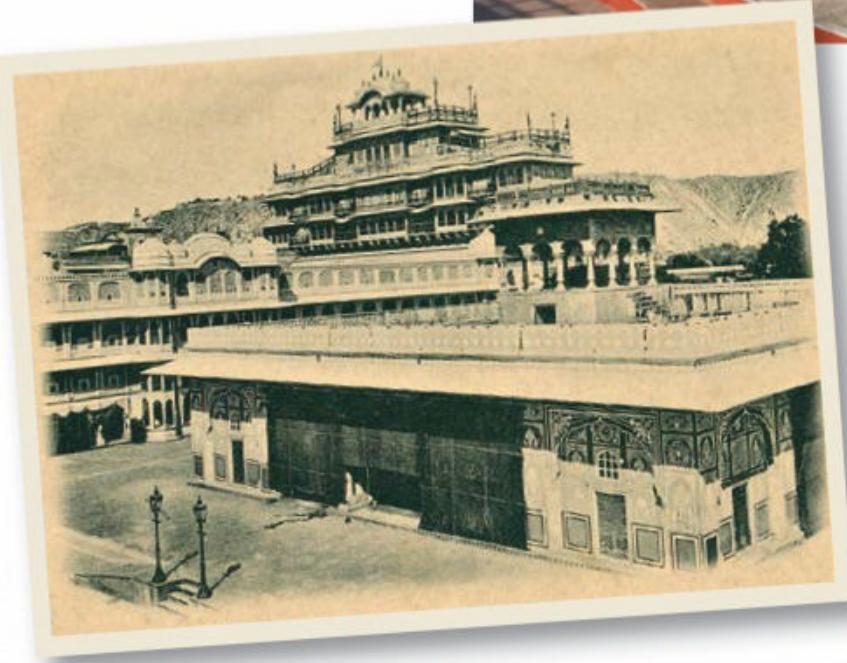
## A CITY IS BORN

Jaipur gets its name from the ruler of the Rajput State of Amber, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II (1686-1743). That's because Sawai Jai Singh was much more than a monarch. His enduring legacy is that of a mathematician, a passionate astronomer, and a town planner with a unique vision. Not only did he build astronomy observatories (Jantar Mantar) in Delhi, Jaipur, Varanasi, Ujjain, and Mathura, but he also founded and built the city of Jaipur as his capital in 1727.

The remarkable city blended the principles of *Shilpa Shashtra* and elements of certain European cities of that time, while applying the ruler's own designs as well.



From top: Chandra Mahal, City Palace Jaipur; and a vintage picture of the same structure from the 1900s.



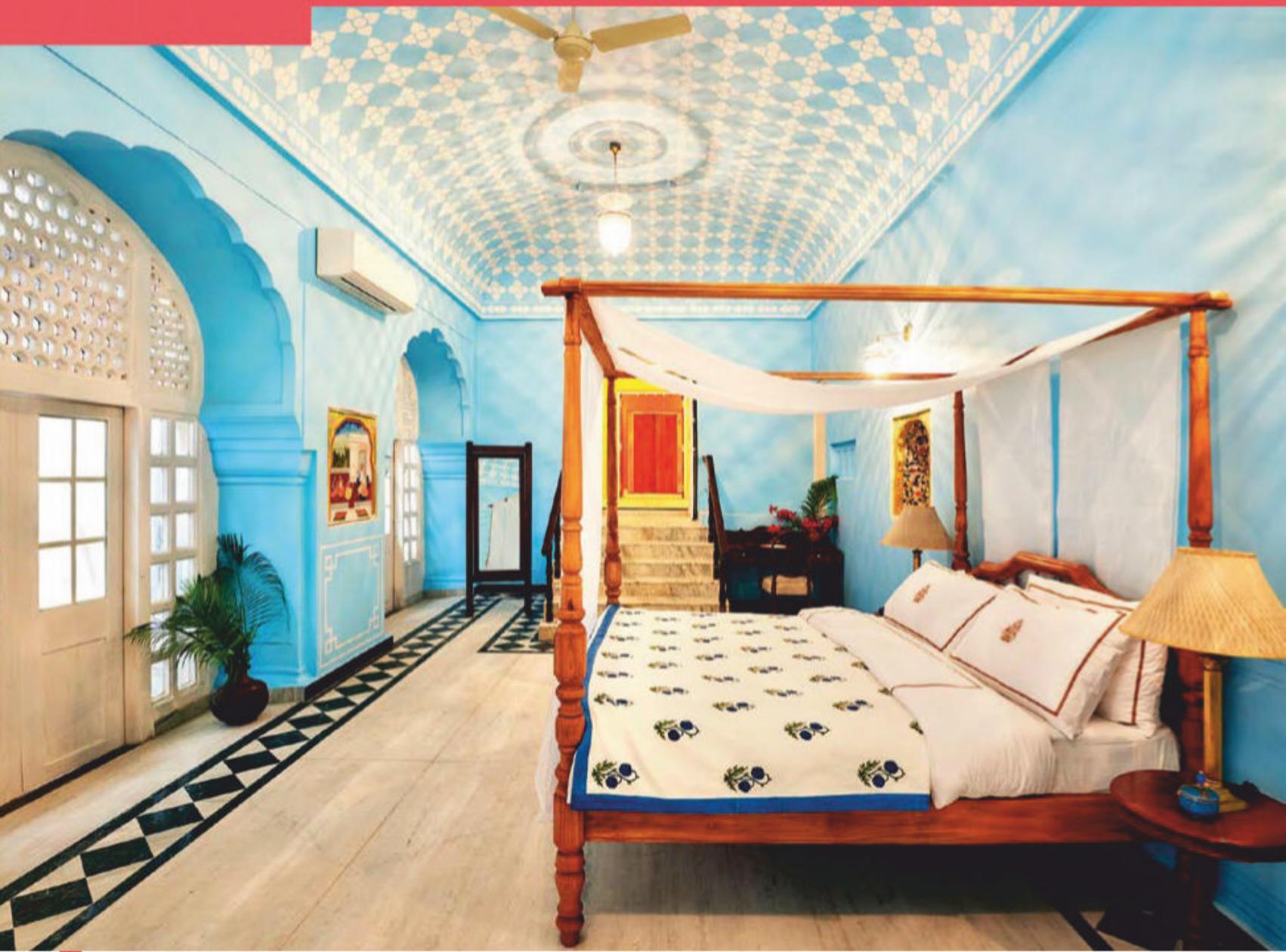
It boasted a grid-like layout with “nine rectangular zones corresponding to the nine divisions of the universe and had different zones allotted to different professions,” according to The British Museum. Wide streets and by-lanes, temples, workshops for artisans, and sprawling markets were all fed by water conduits and wells. In the heart of this beautiful city, the City Palace rose as the epicentre of power as the Maharaja shifted his seat from Amber, eight kilometres north, to the newly built

city. While the former capital was filled with beautiful temples and palaces and protected by steep hills and fortified walls—a typical Rajput stronghold of the time—Jaipur emerged as a new kind of royal city, one that was open to trade and diverse settlers.

The grand palace was not only the residence of the royals, but also a centre of patronage for trade, arts, learning, and festivities. The main markets and bazaars were constructed at state expense, and merchants and bankers from

various communities were invited to set up their businesses there. The Maharaja's successors built on his legacy and expanded his visionary policies. Despite the political upheavals of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the arts continued to flourish in Jaipur under Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh, who added the now iconic Hawa Mahal to the city's landscape.

After a slew of royals from the family had contributed to the development and prosperity of the princely state under the British Crown, Sawai Man Singh II came to the throne as a minor in 1922 and would become the last Maharaja of Jaipur. Post World War II, he oversaw the state's transition from monarchy to democracy and the integration of Jaipur into the new state of Rajasthan as a part of the independent Indian Union. Today, Jaipur is a treasure trove of its royal history, rare arts and crafts, and an intangible but priceless cultural heritage. And the City Palace stands proudly as the biggest testament to this 300-year-long history.



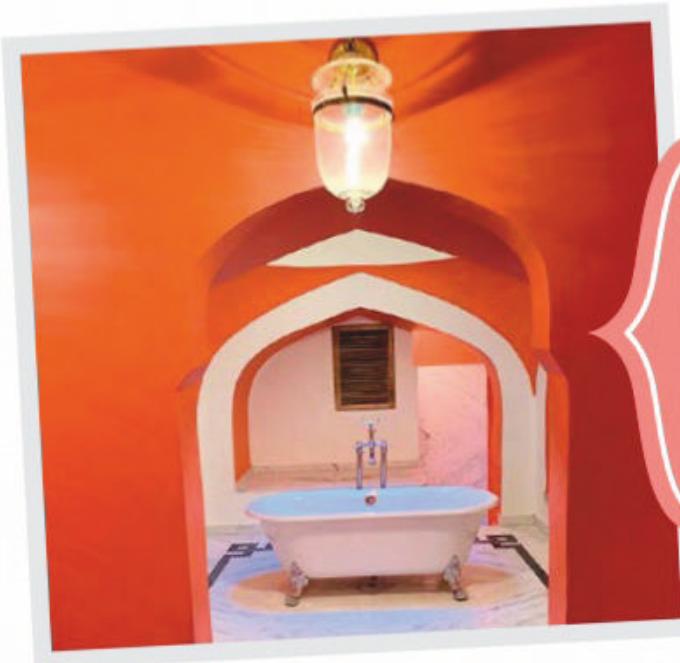
## THE GUDLIYA SUITE

Starting this November, Airbnb users will be able to book an exclusive stay at City Palace Jaipur. In the past, the palace has hosted numerous esteemed guests, including the likes of Princess Diana and Oprah Winfrey. To stay in such a historic structure, surrounded by a land as old as time, is an experience in itself. Your home in Jaipur will be the impeccably styled Gudliya Suite, located in the Royal Quarters of the palace. With a spacious bedroom, en-suite bathroom, and a private swimming pool, the suite leaves no stone unturned in ensuring an opulent and relaxed stay.

But active holidayers should not fret. For there is much to do while you're a guest of the royal family.

*From top: The Gudliya Suite uses motifs from around the palace; the interiors do not shy away from bright colours.*





A guided tour of the palatial complex that is led by a member of the royal staff is free with any booking of The Gudliya Suite.

*Clockwise from top left:*  
The suite features memorabilia of the royal family; vintage paintings and photographs lend it a priceless old-world vibe; at the same time, it does not lack any modern amenities.

The palace itself is a theatrical maze of gardens, pavilions, courtyards, and temples, and it's located smack dab in the city centre, a stone's throw from attractions like Jantar Mantar and Tripolia Gate. Included in the booking is a two-hour guided tour of the palatial complex led by a member of the royal staff—it's an experience that architecture and history buffs will relish. The tour shines light on the intricate art and architecture of the City Palace. Beyond the painstakingly beautiful interiors of the suite, and the palace, the Airbnb listing comes with a range of exclusive benefits fit for kings and queens.

In fact, the experience begins the moment you land in Jaipur. A chauffeur-driven SUV transports you from the airport's arrival gate to your beautiful chambers. At the palace, a private butler is assigned to you for help with banal chores like unpacking and ironing clothes, and also for itinerary logistics like sightseeing recommendations, arrangements for city excursions, restaurant bookings, etc. A member of the royal staff will also be assigned to escort you on a private shopping tour of the Pink City's retail treasures.

As part of the booking, guests get to savour two gourmet

experiences at the palace: breakfast and dinner at Baradari. Restored and reborn as a modern restaurant two years ago, Baradari is a must-visit for any foodie touring Jaipur—not just for its regal ambience and 12-doorway architecture, but also for its tailored menus featuring hearty *Rajasthani* dishes like *laal maas*, top-shelf wine and champagne, as well as insightful interactions with the chef.

In a nutshell, this Airbnb listing is as unique as they come. Whatever be your Jaipur itinerary, the Gudliya Suite in City Palace Jaipur makes for the perfect regal home.

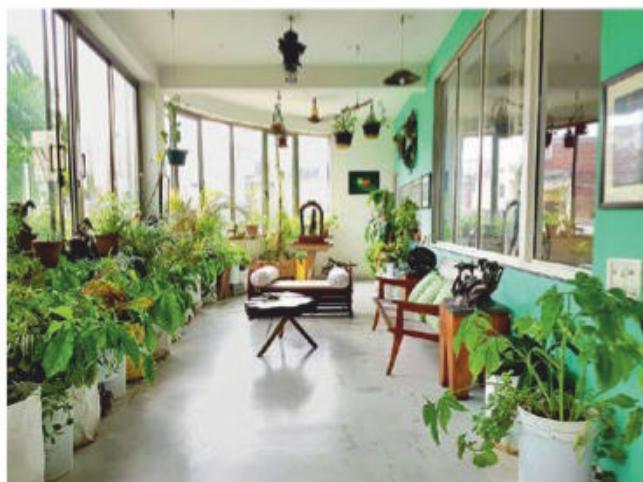


# Simply Serene

Spacious, breezy, and minimalist, **The Designer's Studio** is all about warmth and understated design.

Serene and homely, this Airbnb designed by artist Tarpan Patel is made up of all things comfortable. Apart from sculptures and antiques, many plants dot the creative setting. The apartment is divided into a spacious en suite bedroom, a verdant living room, a well-lit pantry, and a private balcony. It is well equipped with

essentials such as an electric kettle, tea and coffee sachets, mini fridge, cutlery, and hair dryer. With enough room for up to four guests, it is ideal for travellers on the lookout for a simple home away from home, close to the city's attractions. Called The Designer's Studio, it is a gentle reminder of the city's rich artisanal culture.



Clockwise from top left: The bedroom; living room; and the indoor garden, all feature quirky design elements. Below: The house is filled with natural light during the day.



**Utilitarian pieces of art dot every corner of this Airbnb; it's natural to find tips and inspiration on how you could style your own home.**

## THE SPACE

Soft tones and a soothing character make this Airbnb as fit for an author's retreat as it is for a family getaway. The fact that the building is exclusive to the host's family lends it the luxury of privacy in an otherwise brimming city. Book this home for ₹3,000 per night at [airbnb.co.in/rooms/6651885](http://airbnb.co.in/rooms/6651885)

# Chic Luxuries

This smart-looking **Pink City Penthouse** is perfect to experience the modern side of Jaipur.

**A** two-bedroom penthouse steeped in tranquillity, this is your quintessential modern Indian Airbnb. Of wooden accents, solid colours, geometrical patterns, and a lot of greenery, it is a tastefully designed space that can accommodate up to six guests. While the caretaker, Rajesh, is available for assistance throughout the stay, superhosts Naveen and Preeti are always a phone call away. The house features two minimalist bedrooms, two bathrooms, three beds, and a fully equipped kitchen. But the most talked about feature of this simply beautiful Airbnb is its huge terrace that comes with a shaded sit-out area and a swing. If you're lucky, a peacock or two might give you company. Jaipur's landmark locations such as the City Palace and Bapu Bazaar are not far away. Add to these the mere 20-minute driving distance to and from the airport, and you get the ultimate win-win combination.

## THE SPACE

From early mornings of yoga and meditation to private sundowners, this penthouse's versatile space suits many a mood. Elegantly done up, it features a casual yet sophisticated vibe. Book it for a longish stay for ₹4,790 per night at [airbnb.co.in/rooms/37272540](http://airbnb.co.in/rooms/37272540)



From top: Chic prints; European-style furniture; solid colours; and a quaint vibe define the decor at this Airbnb home.

Roam the streets of Jaipur, or stream your favourite show on Netflix—you have a beautiful place to call home.

# Bold & Beautiful

With the perfect melange of vibrant hues and a strong aesthetic, the **Artist's Mansion** is a treat to the senses.

In the upmarket central area of Jaipur, is a traditional Rajasthani-style house that comes with a modern twist—thanks to artist and host Shan Bhatnagar. It steals your heart at first sight. Imagine walking through a verdant garden to an intriguing entrance laden with bold motifs and colours. Inside, the house sports a grand courtyard, a sea-green bedroom, a huge drawing room whose walls are filled with paintings, a spacious lounge area, a bright red dining hall, a quirky lounge bar, and a staircase covered in hand-painted frescos in gold depicting the city of Vrindavan and the River Yamuna that leads you to Shan's studio and his mother Benu Bhatnagar's boutique. Mythological murals, a variety of regional motifs such as blue pottery, stone carving, frescos, and inlay, and royal influences—this is a house that embodies the spirit of Jaipur.



From top: The sea-green bedroom; the bright red dining hall; the frescoed staircase; (far left) and the impressive entrance of the mansion.

Designed to perfection, this home impresses by showcasing local elements on a global platform.



## THE SPACE

The vibe at this mansion is through and through grand and artistic. It is also homely and palatial at the same time. Expect oodles of regality during your stay. Book this home for ₹2,800 per night at [airbnb.co.in/rooms/15028045](https://airbnb.co.in/rooms/15028045)

# An Artsy Retreat

Creature comforts and a tasteful rustic setting have transformed **The Artist's Studio** into a pretty little Airbnb.



From top: The antiques; the quirky furniture; the cute little terrace—all add to the rustic vibe here.



## THE SPACE

Blue being the dominating colour, this home exudes a cool vibe. Bright during the day and cosy at night, it suits a seclusive mood as much as it does an outgoing traveller. The quirky elements in the house—old trunks, brass vessels, mechanical tools, etc—add to its bohemian aura. Book this home for ₹3,100 per night at [airbnb.co.in/rooms/14999327](http://airbnb.co.in/rooms/14999327)



Arpan Patel's studio apartment is a piece of art. While the host is an artist himself, his father, Ankit Patel, too is a renowned sculptor and runs an art gallery in the same building. Hence the name—The Artist's Studio. Sculptures, paintings, antiques, and quirky furniture define the aesthetic in this cosy one-bedroom Airbnb located in the heart of Jaipur. Ideal for up to four guests, this spacious en suite pad comes with a private terrace. After a long day of touring around the city, a rooftop to bask in the dusky evenings comes useful. For your snacking needs, there is an electric kettle, a mini fridge, and plenty of good restaurants in the vicinity that also deliver to the house. Perfect for solo travellers, a small family, and group of friends alike, this is a gem waiting to be explored.

Originally a sculptor's studio, this is an exemplary combination of creativity and hospitality.



*From top:*  
The rooftop pool at the haveli; dine by the pool; inside the royal suite; the cobble-stoned facade of the haveli.

# Old Is Gold

**A Royal Suite** in a heritage haveli, this stay guarantees a taste of the quintessential palatial home in Jaipur.



**A** palatial suite turned boutique hotel, this stay option on Airbnb offers the best of both worlds—a regal setting and state-of-the-art hospitality. The suite is pristine with white marble flooring, minimal wooden furnishings, a king-sized bed, and two sit-in picture windows. Owing to the fact that it is part of a boutique hotel running since 1989, the guest experience here extends beyond the comfort of your room. You get access to all the common places such as the lobby, inner courtyard, expansive garden area, the stunning swimming pool, and a terrace that offers panoramic views of the Pink City.

## THE SPACE

Live life king-size as you kick back and let the legendary Rajputana hospitality and nostalgia take over. Book this home for ₹6,000 per night at [airbnb.co.in/rooms/21971170](http://airbnb.co.in/rooms/21971170)

Personalised, regal, and extravagant—this offering from Airbnb ticks all the boxes of a royal Rajasthani experience.





## HERITAGE CRAFT EXPERIENCE

# Craft Some Stories

Spend a day with the craftswomen of the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation learning their arts, culture, and life stories during this social impact experience.

How many activities that you undertake on vacation have a positive social impact on the local community? This experience by the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation (PDKF) lets you learn local arts and crafts from the rural women of Rajasthan who are part of the foundation. Receive a grand welcome at the breathtaking Badal Mahal—next to the Talkatora Lake—in City Palace Jaipur complex, meet the talented women who make the handicrafts that you love, and learn all about the skill that goes behind them. You even get to make one of these handicrafts and take it back home. Next, listen to the fascinating history of Badal Mahal from your host, Shivina, over a cup of tea and snacks. Built in 1727 AD, the venue was once used for music, art, and cultural gatherings;



today, it's the head office of PDKF. Around 150 women are part of the PDKF family and create everything from key chains to soft toys, fabric necklaces, embroidered saris and dresses, which are sold to guests of City Palace Jaipur.



From top: Many rural women have found a means of livelihood by joining PDKF; the handicrafts made by the women are sold at City Palace Jaipur.

## WHAT'S MORE

All the proceeds from this social impact experience go to PDKF initiatives for women empowerment and digital literacy.

## CULTURE &amp; HERITAGE WALK

# Say Hello To History

Discover the gems hiding in the nooks and crannies of Jaipur on a guided walking tour.



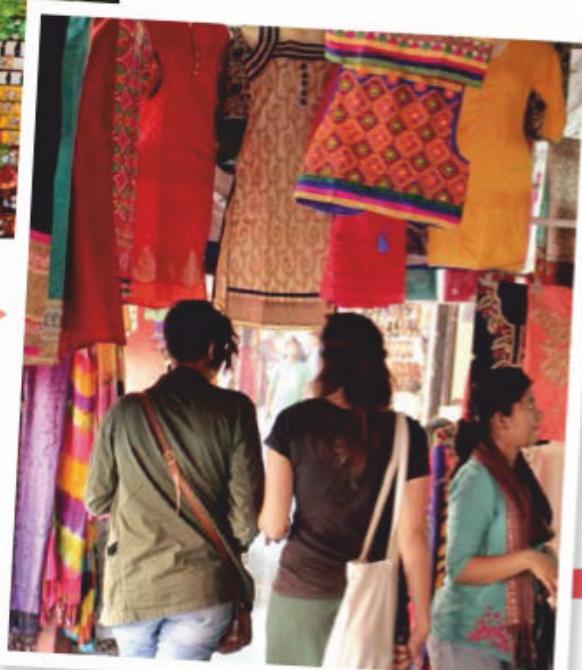
From top: Be it a stroll along Hawa Mahal, a performance at Tripolia Gate, shopping in Johari Bazaar, or a peek into Bapu Bazaar, the Culture & Heritage Walk takes you deep into the beautiful city.

## WHAT'S MORE

Throughout the tour, you will come across iconic street food stalls and joints that have been running for as long as 300 years!

You haven't experienced the glory and goodness of the Pink City until you have lived the life of a local. An absolute foodie, Rishabh believes in sustainable tourism and local experiences, and along with co-host Aayush, takes you on a freewheeling tour. As you walk past the lanes, watching the fascinating history unfurl in the form of forlorn forts, old buildings, and ancient temples, discover countless treasures. Pace up and down the city, wolf down mouthwatering street food, and experience the living traditions and impressive heritage of Jaipur. From Golcha Cinema, Bapu Bazaar, and Johari Bazaar, to Hawa Mahal, the 300-year-old Shiva Temple, Sari Market and everything in between, this tour lets you delve into every corner of the city—old and new.

Book this experience for ₹800 per person at [airbnb.co.in/experiences/507184](https://airbnb.co.in/experiences/507184)



KNOTS OF COMPASSION

# Weave Your Magic

Interact with local craftsmen in the outskirts of the city and learn about the indigenous art of carpet weaving.



Clockwise: The Knots Of Compassion experience gives you an insight into the life of artisans; Jaipur rugs offer up to 196 knots per square inch; these are some of the most sought-after handloom products in the world.



## WHAT'S MORE

**Every penny earned from this activity goes to the Jaipur Rug Foundation that helps villagers find job opportunities.**

This village tour goes beyond the usual and tries to eliminate cultural barriers and revive a dying art form. Experience the timeless craft of carpet weaving and meet the artisans who keep the art of hand knotting alive. The minute detailing and the fascinating tales of these craftsmen will pique your interest. As you sit with these villagers in the comfort of their homes, you will feel the borders disappear and a rustic bond take over. In no time you will develop, what your host Himanshi would call “a heart-to-heart connection beyond borders” with the practitioners of this 2,500-year-old art form. Book this experience for ₹2,999 per person at [airbnb.co.in/experiences/435181](https://www.airbnb.co.in/experiences/435181)

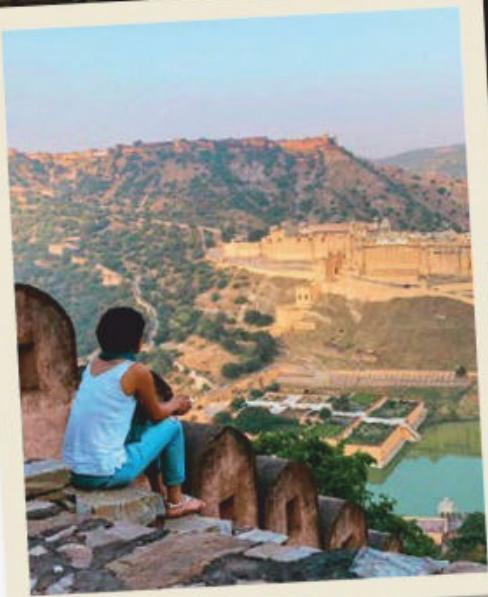
SUNRISE CLIMB

# Chase The Sun

Climb atop the Amer Fort and watch the rising sun soak Jaipur in a golden glow.

Jaipur is a heady brew of old and new, and the beauty of the city lies in its chaotic labyrinthine lanes bathed in vibrant hues. But in case you wish to witness the city in a different pace, rise before the city wakes up and take an early morning stroll to Amer Fort to watch the most stunning sunrise. Stroll through empty streets, climb up the steep stairs of the Amer Fort, and see the city don a golden hue as dawn breaks before your eyes. Expect a lot of trivia related to Rajasthani culture as history buff Puneet Yadav hosts the tour. On your way back, gorge on local delicacies such as hot kachori, samosas, and a chilled glass of lassi, to complete the experience. Chances are, this bird's-eye view of Jaipur will make it to your list of most memorable mornings. Book this experience for ₹2,299 per person at [airbnb.co.in/experiences/375289](http://airbnb.co.in/experiences/375289)

The top of Amer Fort gives you a unique bird's-eye view of the whole city.



#### WHAT'S MORE

The host team has its camera equipment handy, so get clicked at some of the most beautiful locales in Jaipur.





The Blue Pottery experience lets you learn a traditional craft associated with Jaipur, and introduces you to the artists who have kept it alive.



#### BLUE POTTERY

# Paint It Blue

Channel your inner artist with a hands-on blue pottery experience intrinsic to Jaipur.

The art of blue pottery is synonymous with Jaipur — this unique art form is exclusive to the Pink City and every lane and street here owns it. Let the artist in you take over as you get a first-hand experience in the art while watching the entire process take place before your eyes. Your host, Garima, has grown up watching her father work extensively on this

traditional craft, and she now helps the community of artisans grow by spreading awareness about it globally. Talk to the artisans about the dying art and the cultural flexibility that could bring change. Get in touch with your artistic side as you create something new, something blue. Book this experience for ₹1,300 per person at [airbnb.co.in/experiences/889362](http://airbnb.co.in/experiences/889362).

#### WHAT'S MORE

Once you are done learning the entire process, you get to pick one item to design and paint the way you like it!



PRINCESS  
DIYA KUMARI

**Tell us about PDKF –when and why did you set up the Princess Diya Kumari Foundation?**

I always felt the need to give back and to do something that could make a difference for the women in Rajasthan. I started the Foundation in 2013 as a social initiative with the aim of helping underprivileged women.

**What are the main areas that the Foundation focusses on?**

We focus on skill building, girls' education, women's empowerment, and health programmes.

**How will the Airbnb partnership help in taking the mission of PDKF forward?**

We are very happy to partner with Airbnb and see potential in connecting PDKF with a much larger global audience. Having visitors from all over the world can help us connect with possible collaborators and clients. We also appreciate their efforts in bringing more tourists to Jaipur and for promoting our Social Impact Experience at Badal Mahal, where guests can see our women work on various crafts. We are also happy that Airbnb plans to train our women in digital literacy and hospitality, which will help more women develop new skills.

# Allies With A Cause

The **Princess Diya Kumari Foundation (PDKF)** has been committed to bettering the socio-economic status of Rajasthan's underprivileged women since its inception in 2013. In a huge leap towards this direction, the foundation has signed an MoU with **Airbnb** to help the members of PDKF become Airbnb hosts by sharing their homes or their passions with travellers. The founder and visionary of PDKF, Princess Diya Kumari of the Jaipur Royal Family, talks to us about the prospects of this partnership with Airbnb, her vision for the women of the foundation, and more.



BOTTOM: ROBERT PRESTON PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY



(L-R) Amanpreet Singh Bajaj, Country Manager-Airbnb India; and Chris Lehane, Head of Global Policy and Communication, Airbnb; with Princess Diya Kumari, Founder, PDKF; and Shivina Kumari, Executive Director, PDKF.



From top: The partnership will let tourists learn handicrafts of the state; the artisans will turn hosts for the experience; the Airbnb team with the PDKF group.

### Where does Jaipur stand on the global tourism map?

Jaipur is an international tourist destination and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage City in 2019. Jaipur has more than 45 million tourists visiting every year, and we hope to grow these numbers. My family has promoted Jaipur globally, through their travels and we have hosted visitors and

dignitaries from all over the world at our home in the City Palace.

### Can you elaborate on some of the traditional crafts promoted by PDKF?

PDKF promotes heritage crafts such as *gota patti*. The Jaipur royal family traditionally promoted crafts and encouraged the best craftsmen to settle in Jaipur. We

have many antique garments with *gota patti* work worn by my ancestors at the Textile Museum at the City Palace. We hope to revive and create a demand for these ancient handicrafts through our work and designs at PDKF.



**“Globally, about 50 per cent of Airbnb hosts are women, which is very unusual in most economic sectors. We have made a conscious effort to support the economic empowerment of the women around the world. This collaboration with Princess [Diya Kumari] and the royal family is a natural extension of that vision.” —CHRIS LEHANE, Head of Global Policy and Communication, Airbnb**

# Royal Recommendations

In a city that is brimming with tradition, culture, and history, it helps if you have some expert advice. Here are some Jaipur itinerary recommendations from the Maharaja himself.



## BARADARI

A rendition of a *baradari* (pavilion with 12 doors) that was once used as a performance arena, the contemporary Rajasthani restaurant at City Palace Jaipur is a beautiful blend of the old and the new. Its black and white patterned floor is a modern interpretation of the indigenous hand-dyed striped pattern called *leheriya*; the ceiling, walls, and niches feature motifs of *thikri* (mirror inlay); a fluted-marble water cascade lends a pleasant ambient tune; and the ancient recipe of cured slaked lime gives the place Jaipur's quintessential pink colour. Nicknamed the palace cafe, it serves the best of classic *Rajasthani* cuisine as well as Continental dishes.



**Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh at Sukh Niwas, City Palace Jaipur. Inset: Bar Palladio is an ode to Italian cuisine.**



## BAR PALLADIO

Inspired by the iconic Caffè Florian and Harry's Bar in Venice and named after Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, Bar Palladio Jaipur sings odes to Italian cuisine while retaining a Mughal perspective. Located in a restored garden belvedere of Narain Niwas Palace Hotel, it hosts wandering peacocks, mature mango trees, and a garden of tented canopies. Designed by Dutch designer Marie-Anne Oudejans, Bar Palladio Jaipur is an innovative vision for European dining in India. Integral to the menu are dishes that tap into the soul of Italian cooking: minestrone, penne all'arrabbiata, spaghetti carbonara, etc. [bar-palladio.com](http://bar-palladio.com)

## PANDIT KULFI

A humble ice-cream shop near Hawa Mahal, Pandit Kulfi is a world-renowned joint. Famous for its wide range of kulfi flavours (over 200), it serves nostalgia in cones. From the classic milky treat with crushed almonds, cashews, sugar, and cinnamon to unique flavours like chocolate, custard apple, mango, and even *paan* (betel nut), each kulfi is delightful in its own right. Drop by

**From a former princely state to the capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur is the ideal city to feel the regal pulse of the state.**

around 4 pm and you can see the kulfi being poured into conical moulds and set in a box of salted ice. There's little wonder it ranks among the favourite places of the young Maharaja.

## CITY PALACE MUSEUM

It is a well-known fact that City Palace Jaipur doubles as the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum. It houses several galleries that depict the life of the royal family across generations. For instance, Mubarak Mahal has a textile gallery, which exhibits a majestic collection of royal costumes. Similarly, there's an

*Clockwise from top left:* City Palace Jaipur doubles as the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum; it features the history of the royal family; Baradari is a sunlit cafe by the day and a fine-dining restaurant by the night.

exhibit of over 2,000 glass plate negatives dating from the 1860s to the 1880s, many of which were taken by Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II, perhaps the most famous royal photographer of India. The Silekhana gallery of the museum has one of the largest and finest collections of weapons in India. It features antique handguns and various kinds of swords, double-edged cutters, daggers, knives, axes, and arrows.

# JAIPUR

1135 AD

Sheesh Mahal

Amber Palace

Maharaja Sawai  
Man Singh II  
Museum



CITY PALACE

Nahargarh Fort

Once upon  
a time at Nahargarh

Baradari

Pandit Kulfi

Jal Mahal

Jantar Mantar

Rawat Kachori

The Artist's Studio

The Designer Studio

Albert Hall  
Museum

Bapu Bazaar

Bar Palladio

Johri Bazaar

Pink City  
Penthouse

Artist's Mansion

Virasat  
Heritage  
Restaurant

Royal Suite

Hawa Mahal

airbnb

Homes

Restaurants

Jaipur International Airport



